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1

Class Struggle: Dialectics versus Metaphysics

Haz Al-Din[1]

Below is an excerpt of a text written back in 2020 which was never published. It provides some insight into some of the theoretical trajectories and lines of inquiry which have come to preponderate the development of my thinking.

The materialist dialectic affords precedence to content over form, matter over spirit, particular over universal, etc. - but the *contradiction* (that is dialectic) *itself,* in contrast to the contradiction between classes, can never find permanent resolution but is only repeated in new ways (which is why Marx endows essential significance to the *proletariat,* not peasantry). Almost all hitherto Marxists have committed the error of failing to distinguish the absolute, from relative form of this contradiction. Thus the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the late aristocracy had been relativized as a contradiction between two mere classes. After the triumph of the bourgeoisie in England, its democratic universality was erroneously assumed to have laid to rest the *living essence* of the class struggle, with the decisive confrontation between the proletariat and bourgeoisie alone remaining.

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And yet, after the triumph of the liberal bourgeoisie, what was dismissed as vestiges of the past (small proprietorship, aristocracy (oligarchy), etc.) simply reasserted itself in new ways (and which were being investigated already in the last segments of *Capital*), democratic universality was not only particularized in the industrial factories of England, but in the persistence of so-called pre-capitalist and pre-modern relations of production. These form(s) have only *transformed* in the centuries since the rise of modern industrial capitalism, but the more fundamental contradiction posed by them to the universality of statehood has persisted. According to the textualistic *dogmatists*, the ground of *class struggle* is given only in the democratic universality of the citizen and statehood, and yet the *latter itself* remains in a state of permanent antagonism with its own conditions of existence in *the people*. The experience of history demonstrates the *living essence* of the class struggle, as co-temporal throughout ever repeating democratic and peoples' revolutions which *deepen* the dialectic of humanity's universality through its particular realities.

The fundamental class antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie demonstrates an antagonism internal to *one* state universality, and thus *one* (legally instanced) form of the people, *one* nation, *one* historically decisive moment. Class difference is revealed only in the *formal equality* of the people. Yet it does not *bring to a halt* the *development* of the people, the historical development of state and national realities. However according to Substantialists, the development of mankind ceased after culminating in 19th century England (all following history being unreal, accidental, decadent, impossible, etc.). In their high priestly idealism, the reality of what is a single moment of the class struggle is recognized only in a theoretical consciousness particular to them alone, which preserves the memory of that Zion at the expense of the *actual history* which has unfolded and which *continues* to unfold *at their expense*.

But the science of class struggle did not *end* history, it only *clarified* it. Consciousness of the proletariat's world-historical mission does not make for a *substitute* to the realities inherited by history, and thus the relation it establishes toward them cannot be preemptively decided. The cretinization, stagnation, idiocy and cluelessness cultivated by metaphysical pseudo-Marxism, and its *actual retarding* of popular movements in the West, is its only real and lasting historical consequence. In taking for granted the form of universality (of both *statehood* and *reason*) that grounds *consciousness* of the *essence*, the academic-textualists have, across the history of Western Marxism, consistently aligned themselves with decrepit Western imperialism, and the institutional

establishments of their respective nations as prostitutes of the financial oligarchy. Taking refuge in this fortress against the hordes, Moishe Postone went as far as to condemn the very naming of the latter (and the chain of institutional corruption flowing from it) 'structural anti-semitism.'

The class struggle, as traditionally expounded between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, only demonstrates a contradiction *internal* to the form of the state's universality. The chief significance of proletarian consciousness consists not in *arbitrating* the terms of social revolution, whose development proceeds independently of that consciousness, but in *clarifying* the course of its *development.* This is why what chiefly distinguished the experience of Marxists in the 20th century was not the *first* revolutions for the seizure of state power (a precedent accomplished in the French revolution), but the *second* revolutions (the Stalin and Mao revolutions) which allowed for the original to survive whereupon its *limit* (the same one recognized by the early Marx, and which was responsible for his very recognition of the proletariat's significance) was reached. *Social revolution* is an ever recurring inevitability, the *decisiveness* of proletarian consciousness enters only after having submitting to the laws revealed by it, and *surviving* its inevitable contradictions.

The inevitability of social revolution can be proven not in proving any everlasting criterion(s) of conflicting self-interest between differing groups, moral wrongs to be rectified, or contradictions between ideas - it is proven *in the very formal universality* of *any given community* and the *very real conditions* of that social existence. The academic-textualists take for granted the formal universality of 19th century statehood (inherited by American imperialism) as a condition of recognizing class struggle's *true essentiality*. In doing so they deny the essential site of the class struggles' real development. In contrast to their prejudices, no formal (urban, institutional, rational, conscious, heavenly, et. al) universality is ever *permanently* reconciled, it continues to enter into contradiction with its demotic conditions of its existence. The inability for (the) universal form to fully conquer the conditions of its very origination (i.e. to be transmuted among the whole people) inevitably gives rise to a special segment that stands against and apart the whole of society.

This is not out of any immutable law of self-interest, nor does the formal universality necessarily encounter its limit in being unable to exhaust the *wealth* of particularity inhering in the people. Rather, such a limit is inevitably reached whereupon the negation posed by the universal form to the particular is made *superfluous*. At the outset, universality is only an *apparent* universality.

It would be wrong to collapse the distinction between a universal ideology, principle of state, or even religion with the *concrete whole* of social existence. On the other hand, the *novel appearance* of a universal principle does in fact *reflect* revolutionary changes in the concrete totality of social existence and history. Ones which have *already occurred*.

Yet throughout the history of private property, the form of the universal, at the outset the *newborn product* of social processes, inevitably forecloses any relationship toward its real origins, and demands the imposition of special criterion (i.e. the cultural phenomena of *aristocracy*, which ironically reaches its zenith in modern political correctness) to safeguard the *formal purity* of the original negation - like an inbred aristocracy. The universal is unable to conquer its particular conditions, i.e. the *conclusion* is unable to fashion its *premise* in a way that is formally consistent with it, on account of an *immanent* limitation, not one posed by the premise itself (on account of *formally discernible* contrary qualities): It is unable to discover the *concrete essence* of its form *on terms familiar to the form itself*. Put in solely abstract (intellectual) terms, the sole significance of *materialist dialectic* consists in avoiding this error, and *imperiling* form in content (i.e. *socialist realism, Socialism in One Country, etc.*).

In other words, *the exact opposite* of the academic-textualists, vulgarizers, dogmatists, and almost all contemporary Western 'Marxists.' The sole significance of the proletariat (in contrast to the peasantry), for Marx, consisted in proving the *immanent* limitation of universal form (of the state, thought, rationality, philosophy, etc.), not in any *essential* privileging of 'modern' over 'archaic' or 'urban' over 'rural' (as evidenced by the peculiar positions of the *late Marx* and the very experience of history). The peasantry are defined *positively*, thus their privileging *in thought* would inevitably come under the terms of the then prevailing (universal, state, etc.) consciousness.

For example, Narodism, for all its pretenses, could only end up reflecting the limited petty bourgeois consciousness of its leading intelligentsia. By one-sidedly regarding the peasantry as the sole revolutionary subject, the bourgeois, metaphysical presumptions about the then social, demographic and historical realities could not be subject to the process of dialectical overcoming. But on the other hand, to dismiss the peasant element (the *democratic* - more accurately for the Leninist meaning the *demotic*, i.e. not liberal civil society - petty bourgeois) as mere vestiges of the past takes for granted the establishment of the *present*. In reality, a given form of the universal always has *unfinished*

business with its inceptual conditions. *Establishments* come into being through the tautology of form, or economically, the recycling of value and in the aggregation of private property (i.e. in the present day, big capital appears in scale as 20th c. socialistic states).

Such 'establishments' consist not in any *one* particular class, but an entire stratum defined by informal networks, institutional corruption, economic rigging, bureaucracy, insulation, mediocrity, metonymy, cultural degeneracy, incest, etc. - characteristics that had hitherto defined the *aristocracies* of any given society in history. These are precisely what characterize the decadent phase of the rule of the bourgeoisie - a phase which Marxists regarded to have already started by the late 19th century.

The idealist prejudice of academic-textualistic 'Marxists' has thus far consisted in assuming that the essentiality of class struggle is waged primarily at the *site* of these *establishments* (hence the rise of 'graduate student unions', etc.), whereas the experience of history, consistent with the materialist dialectic, demonstrates that the site of the essence lies not in heaven but in Earth (i.e. Lenin identifies the *development of the peasantry* as the truly revolutionary site of class struggle, not the urban centres, and identifies *a revolutionary petty bourgeoisie* in the small proprietor as opposed to the *big bourgeoisie* of the *establishment* etc.). Every *establishment* would prefer to have its last word as regards the messy conditions of its origination (the production of value, private property, etc.), like Freud's primal horde.

By the time the conclusion - the revolution in the forces of production, a new form of the universal (which consolidates in *establishment*) - comes to *alter* the *premise* (as it most certainly does) - it is *already too late* for the 'forward-thinking' cretins and ideologists of *establishments*. Revolutionary partisans (which inevitably *originate* in the metropole) do not inoculate revolutionary feelings among the people, they discern, cultivate, and give form to them where they already exist. It launches its 'base of operations' not from the (metropolitan, et. al) liberal bourgeoisie, but from the hinterlands, which comprises the site for the *repetition* of the essential class struggle *on a new, fresh basis*. The intellectual *shit of the nation,* having contended themselves with acquiring knowledge of the true essence and the true content (of class struggle), do not recognize any antagonism of forms, and thus do not see any difference between class struggle within the hinterlands (peasantry) and the 'class struggle' within the metropole. Yet the idealist error of dismissing forms

as 'all the same' *by a purely formal criterion* is *precisely* what is alien to Marxism.

The proletarian revolution can be waged only at the site where *the conditions* of the essence of class struggle*'s disclosure*, are *repeated* anew and afresh. The academic-textualists do not distinguish between the conditions of the *revelation* of the essence and the *actual site* of essence. Such is their foolishness that they would insist that shark's fin is the same as the shark itself, such is their foolishness so as to insist that what is proven by the proletariat's existence for a nation, is the same as the *positive development* of the nation itself. The decisive confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie only proves the deeper social revolution at hand between *established states* and *volcanic popular forces* within a given historical determination (nation, region, civilization, etc.). Such revolutions (whether it is *politically* revolutionary or otherwise) are inevitable and even cyclical, and yet the *decisiveness* of proletarian consciousness reveals itself only through the course of *these such* revolutions. The social revolution posed by the Russian peasantry against the Russian establishment was *inevitable*, the decisiveness of proletarian consciousness enters only in discerning *its true essence*.

Western 'Marxists,' in all their idealist weakness, could not have possibly accepted the humiliating reality that social revolution proceeds independently of the *consciousness* and *knowledge* of it. They have failed to grasp the *material essence* of social revolution, preemptively attempting to arbitrate its conditions *in* thought, consciousness, or ideology. Yet all the experience of history demonstrates the fact of the *discontinuity* between the material force of social revolution and the *consciousness of it*. *The fact* of a social revolution of the 1930s that had occurred in all the then modern nations of the world can be easily demonstrated (in the compromises of bourgeois reforms, in the reaction of Fascism, and in the phenomena of 'Stalinism'), both as the objective *consequence* of transformations in the forces of production (including the means of communication) as well as the objective *cause* defining the epoch as a whole. The material force of social revolution does not imply (as the vulgarizers had once contended) the automatic victory of the revolutionary proletariat, but the *antecedence* of the *ground* set before its *partisans* (in contrast to the *voluntarists*).

The academic-textualists might protest, that in recognizing the *living* essence of social revolution, one must nihilistically deny the *eschatological* striving of world history, the *decisiveness* of the proletarian class for it and Communism as

the *riddle of history solved*. *What movement of the heavenly bodies is possible without the sun?* They might ask. In doing so, they would have committed the error of not only preemptively assuming the *conditions* of the end of history, *but the actual site* at which it is waged. That according to the most basic dialectic thinking the universal exists only through the particular, should make it self evident that the *true absolute* can only take *relative* form. It is not that the material force of social revolution is indifferent to proletarian consciousness, only that *their site* is *discontinuous;* they are not one and the same *Substance,* be as they may be of the same *material objectivity.* The decisive site of proletarian consciousness for world history can only be taken as a whole, albeit for the same reason it is only able, at the *outset*, to assume abstract form.

Other kinds of consciousness are able to preponderate the terms of social revolution, and proletarian consciousness, at the outset, allows for insight into their ultimate *vanity*. Yet here, it could not possibly be *decisive*. It is only *decisive* where, at any given point or place in history, it delivers the partisan to what is concrete; where what is historically relative is at the same time *absolute*. To discern the true essence of social revolution is not to preemptively *arbitrate* it, but to receive the true calling and striving of the era, however relative and particular, struggling to be born. The contention of Marxism as a whole is thus that: Be it as it may that other kinds of consciousness can preponderate the terms of social revolution, they will never successfully establish a *scientific* relation to their *own object*; they are condemned to vanity not because of any immutable historical laws, but because they obscure, distort, pervert, etc. *their very own* object. The implication is clear; the decisive significance of Marxism is not negative (Adorno), but positive, it lies in establishing a *concrete relation* to *concrete reality*.

The chief discovery of the third volume of *Capital* and principal striving of the project *as a whole* (a project that *remained incomplete*) has been neglected entirely by the academic-textualist vulgarizers, for all their pretenses to textual stringency. That is not only in establishing a formulaic distinction between profit (capital) and rent (landed property) as categories of political economy, but in demonstrating how the latter, a vestige of the past for bourgeois civilization, *re-emerges by way* of the *former*. Taken to its conclusion, such a discovery also demonstrates how the proletariat, the *negation* of the national, peasant element, so far as it assumes particular form, is but a *moment* in the dialectic of its real being (the *negation of the negation*). The experience of the October revolution shows that the peasant element cannot be dismissed as a vestige of the past to the proletariat, the latter is but the moment of its *negation;*

the two, like capital and landed property, are co-temporal, occupying different sites of the same being.

How it happens that 'petty bourgeois' tendencies continue to persist among the overwhelming majority of any given population (even after the complete triumph of modern industry, as in England), has proven among the greatest scandals of Western 'Marxism.' Yet they need only return to their original mistake of having made absolute what was relative. The destruction of the 'peasant' element was assumed on account of the socialization, inter-connectedness, etc. corresponding to modern industrial civilization rendering impossible its atomic independence. The error lies in having assumed that the peasantry, while *in fact itself* occupying a particular reality, emerged fresh from the primordial, Hobbesian jungle. But every peasantry in history had taken as its premise, in one way or another, the infrastructure of common civilization. The assumption had been falsely made, in a manner alien to the chief discovery of Marx and Engels, that the increasing economic interdependence (which is relative) proves *an end* to the dialectic of humanity, of peoples and nations, and of the inexorably living relation between future and past.

In the midst of this, being powerless before the distortion and slander by the enemies of Marxism, the academic textualists foolishly deny the facts of historical experience, and that the final eschatological moment (i.e. of final capitalist socialization or 'proletarianization') is still underway. Foolishly, they take as an article of proof for this, the socialization that is, in any given period of the past one hundred years, underway. Yet they do not see that this socialization is always *relative*, it does not culminate in any *full and permanent* negation but *is a moment* in the dialectic of *positive being*. The significance of proletarian consciousness does not consist in the Trotskyist error of belief in *permanent* negation, but in discovering in *moment* of the negation a concrete truth, whose actual *positive consequences* cannot be preemptively chosen or decided, and which guarantees only the avoidance of that vanity which trembles amidst the inevitability of change. The proletariat is *concrete-universal*, its significance (for or, at the expense of philosophy) consists in the unity of the universal and particular, abstract and concrete, negative and positive.

The assumption of the total permanent *ontological* negation of peasant by proletarian, country by town, rural by urban, passion by reason, matter by spirit, atomic by collective, past by future, national by global, etc. - evinces the vain psychosis of the bourgeois-consciousness that is but the opposite end of the

coin to its hypocritical philistinism. One-sidedness is impossible for the proletarian *aesthetic* (i.e. the higher sense) *precisely because* it affords precedence to content over form (in contrast to Zizek's 'critique' of 'Stalinist' dialectical materialism). Every one-sidedness is but *a different path* to the same position (for instance the degeneracy held in common between liberalism, anarchism, fascism, etc.) which seeks to preserve the purity of form *against* content. Form for the proletarian *aesthetic*, by contrast, *arises from* humility toward content rather than being *set against*. The *form* of the *universal* is *not set against* the *content* out of which it had arisen (certainly, however, it is set against false forms), it is embraced as the miracle, the trace, and the beauty of a deeper content.

What is decisive for proletarian consciousness lies not at the site of the negation (the *resistance toward* and *veneration of which* being two forms of the *same vanity*), but the *negation of the negation*. Thus the object of the proletarian aesthetic, and likewise materialist dialectic thinking does not resist the inevitable negation of its form, but renders all negation *as but a moment* in *its* reconciliation. Taken in a more practical sense, recognizing the significance of the peasant element does not amount to reactionism against the inevitability of socialization (et. al), only that the latter (at the outset purely negative) by no means can be taken as a final social form. For every proletarian there is also the dispossessed and landless peasant; the striving towards positive being and reparcelization is an existential fact of its condition. Only reparcelization (i.e. taken in the broadest sense of the redistribution of *landed property*) takes as its premise the prior form of aggregation (i.e. the postwar American *automobile* or home took as its premise the modernization of agriculture).

Even the very qualifier of the *petty bourgeoisie*, which had always been wrought with ambiguity historically, would not suffice to name the site of the *peasant element* in question. One the one hand, the petite-bourgeoisie can refer to what is today called professional-managerials. On the other hand, it can refer to the independent small proprietor. Furthermore, even the small proprietor can be further broken down, the small artisan (*sans cullote, urban serf, bazaar merchant*), small landowner (i.e. traditional peasant proprietor) metropolitan (i.e. the small businesses of gentrification), etc. With only the latter sharing the same class (and thus social, cultural, historical, etc.) characteristics as professional-managerials (i.e. the decisive element being the *virtual* orientation). To speak of the peasant element means to name what is antecedent in the first place; what flows *infinitely toward the past*, to characterize it as *petty-bourgeois* is to deny the material conditions which ground such a

conceptual apparatus in the first place (*as in fact* material). It is to commit the error of assuming no discontinuity between essence and appearance, past and future, material and ideal, et. al

The bourgeoisie as a class can be characterized by the pure *positing* of positive form (of ideas, aesthetics, law, religion, economic value, etc. - the bourgeoisie is *neoclassical*, it, like the Roman citizen, attempts to posit on the basis of the positing-of-itself, it is the *true* class of Lukacsian 'self-consciousness'). It does not belong to the same categorization as does aristocracy, since aristocracy is itself the *social realization* of positive form (chiefly that of law; as *legally* recognized ruling class, and before then, a growing scandal to bourgeois democracy). Thus bourgeoisie does not *actually* refer to a social form cognizant of itself in some way: the *idea* of bourgeoisie, unlike aristocracy (or the transient *citizen*), does not *reproduce* itself in the *reality* of the bourgeoisie, but through active analysis. As bourgeoisie inevitably merges into aristocracy (the limit to the positing, the limit to the production of value and consequent recycling), it inevitably gives rise to *democratic petty-bourgeois* tendency originating from peasant hinterland. But as the 'reflexive determination' (Hegel) of positive law delves deeper and deeper into its own *real* (and not imagined) conditions of existence, class categorization becomes increasingly negative. In contrast to both bourgeoisie and aristocracy, peasant refers to a stratum that relates to its positive intelligibility only negatively.

It should be remembered that in Russia, the 'peasant's referred not to a distinct class, but a vague designation given to subsistence 'farmers,' who themselves oscillated between different class tendencies. Yet of these tendencies oscillated around *a single social subject*, the subsistence farmer embedded within a traditional, communal existence grappling and struggling with the introduction of capitalism. In this sense, the 'peasant' can be understood as the *concrete determination* of the modern subject - the 'abstract' determination being the subject of modern law. While modern subjects are all formally free individuals at liberty to do whatever they want, and whose rights are defined negatively - in their *concrete determination*, the great majority of the people remain embedded in a specific communal context and way of life. This is why it is possible to compare modern 'middle classes' to 'peasants.'

The essence of peasant-ness is defined not by the *idea* of itself, but (the relation it possesses) to *material being* which is at best ambivalent to the form of its categorization by institutions or thinking subjects. The main thing for the peasant is not *the idea* of how it is defined, but how it comes to be defined *as a*

real determination materially, (by which the idea can be *reproduced*), the manner by which it enters into intercourse with the real conditions of life in the first place, which do not obey the terms of its *reflexivity* (it is on account of this insolence that peasant culture, for aristocracy is impure, forbidden, *deplorable*, etc.). The bourgeoisie as a whole take as their premise *established order.* Peasant being, by contrast, *already* takes as its premise order that is *real*, but which has yet to be *established*. Typically, the *real order* upon which the peasantry bases its existence is assumed to be that of the *vestiges of the past*, whereupon a new state is established. Yet the experience of history demonstrates the revenge of the past over that arrogance which pretends to its conquest.

During the period of the Iranian Shah's *white revolution*, the Iranian peasantry were assumed to have comprised the vestiges of the previous established (feudal) order. Yet the exact opposite showed itself to be true, just as it did in Russia and China. They *in fact* inhered the very *raw material* of the future. Only the *established order* which contends itself with *final knowledge* of the pasts' *essence* can be said to be *vestigial*. Being no less *real*, the *order* upon which the peasantry base themselves always *has yet* to come into *existence*. It has yet to be *named* and given determination as a principle of state. The essence of this order, whereupon it *reveals* itself, always comes at the expense of the one established (as well as the very arrogant *assumptions* about its essence), and herein lies the peasantry's *revolutionary* nature. That reality precedes its *recognition,* that every order is condemned on its own *real basis* appears an absurdity for the bourgeois consciousness, for which form is final before content, appearance final before essence. But for materialist dialectic thinking, content means only that which is afresh with the annihilation, and rebirth of form anew.

Marxism-Leninism must critically re-examine ‘Western Marxist’ dogmas about the meaning and nature of the ‘peasantry.’ The ‘peasantry’ appear completely outmoded and irrelevant in the 21st century. Yet the struggle between concrete social subjects in the form of *freehold laborers*, and abstract subjects in the sense of liberalism (and thus, *debtors*) remains essential to understanding class struggle in the 21st century. The question must be posed: What is the true subject of class struggle?

Is the object of proletarian class struggle solely the fulfillment of negative bourgeois liberty, or the fulfillment of a concrete social existence - and one, moreover, which includes the entire accumulated history? ▉

2

Sign-Value and Bourgeois Degeneracy in Moribund Superimperialism: A Case Study of Golden Goose Shoes

Carlos L. Garrido[1]

A student writing for Baylor University's paper, the Baylorlariat, expresses his inability to understand how so many students on campus enjoyed having Golden Goose shoes.[2] For those that are not in the fashion world, imagine the

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2. Syndey Matthews, "Golden Gooses are a Waste of Money," *BarlorLariat* (February 21, 2023): https://baylorlariat.com/2023/02/21/golden-gooses-are-a-waste-of-money/

shoes you would see on the feet of a homeless man by a New York subway. Have you captured the image? Well, this is what Golden Goose sells —'new' shoes that look like they have been worn down for decades.

But wait, there's more! If selling hand distressed shoes off the shelves as 'new' isn't ridiculous enough, the fact that they range anywhere from 600 to 2000 dollars should warrant its acceptance as one of the seven wonders of world stupidity.

The young student's puzzlement is understandable. In terms of the use-value of the shoes, they are no different than any other pair one can buy off the rack. In fact, their wear might reduce its utility to that equivalent of a beat down thrift store shoe, price difference aside.

The exchange value of the shoe is interesting. The process of making a Golden Goose shoe is anywhere from two to three times as time consuming than most regular shoes. Perhaps it is the case that the increase in abstract labor time, and hence, in exchange value, is here proportional to the price the luxury commodity gets realized through. Although, without a doubt, spending two to three times as long on a shoe to meticulously make it look like it belongs in the garbage can hardly be said to fully explain why they costs anywhere from 4-5 times more than regular sneakers, on conservative estimates.

Even if we accept that exchange value, that is, quantitative differences in socially necessary labor time, can account for differences in pricing, we must still ask — is meticulous craftsmanship the reason young, wealthy, students have made Golden Goose shoes fashionable? Is the fact that they are handmade really the reason why people are willing to drop the equivalent of a week's pay for an average American worker on these distressed shoes? There are plenty of brands that provide an equivalent amount of labor time for their handmade shoes which charge two to three times less than Golden Goose.

A much more explanatory reason for the Golden Goose phenomenon, in my view, lays in the status that the commodity has achieved thanks to the relations it is embedded in. While we don't have to go as heretical as Jean Baudrillard did, can we not say that the *sign-value* of the commodity is doing the heavy lifting?[3] Is it not the case that, fundamentally, the whole purpose of buying the shoes is the prestige and status it bestows to the owner? Are the students of

3. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981).

Baylor really interested in the utility of Golden Goose shoes? Are they really craftsmanship aficionados? Or, are they simply trying to look cool and hip, to give out the transgressive image of not caring about how they look while simultaneously caring enough to drop half a stack on the silhouette on their feet?

The misguided student writing for the school paper, unable to understand this phenomenon, is fundamentally working through the wrong lens. Approaching it from the standpoint of utility, or even aesthetics, will give you no real explanation for the trend. It is the wrong paradigm through which to approach the question itself. It is as unfitting as someone rating *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* poorly simply because it wasn't funny. Well, it wasn't meant to be — the framework through which this melodrama must be judged is completely different. Likewise with the Golden Goose shoes. It is a commodity whose price and popularity is primarily determined by the exclusivity, prestige, and status attached to it. In other words, to truly understand the Golden Goose phenomenon, one must attempt to grasp the significance of the sign-form that is imposed upon the commodity-form in the system of carefully manipulated signs.

It is a mistake, however, to reduce this whole sphere of economic interaction to simply a system of signs. This is where even the young Baudrillard goes astray. It is only in some instances, with certain 'luxury' commodities, that sign-value rises up to an indispensable explanatory category to understand the rift between exchange value and price marked by the inflated price. Even here, the relations of the systems of signs are themselves underpinned by relations of production which must never be undermined.

At a more basic level, it is important to point out how 'distressed' shoes are the culmination of a decades-long trend in the West, from ripped jeans to bleach stained shirts, which tends to fetishize the disintegrating, the decaying, that which in its very material form is visibly withered away. It has been a spiral into more profound forms of cultural degeneracy, which consists of a basic lack of decency and self-propriety — as Edward Smith has put it, degeneracy consists in the absence of respect for "yourself, others, and your environment."[4]

This term, degeneracy, should not be given all that easily to the right. Is it not the case that the bourgeoisie, especially in the stage of imperialism, can

4. Edward Liger Smith, "Civilize the Mind, Make Savage the Body," *Red America* 002 (December 2024), 7.

produce nothing more than a decadent culture? As Che Guevara put it, “in culture, capitalism has given all that it had to give, and nothing remains but the stench of a corpse, today's decadence in art.”[5]

Both decadent and degenerate imply societal decay, deterioration, and moral corruption. Decadent, which comes from the Latin *decadere*, meant originally to fall or decay. Degenerate, from the Latin *degenerare*, also refers to a ‘fall,’ to a process of decline — but here’s the caveat, a process of *decline from one’s class*. Degenerate signifies a more specific form of decay than decadence. Decadent here stands as an abstract universal, a decay in general, while degenerate is a concrete universal, a particular form of decadence, a decay from one’s class.

The bourgeoisie was once the class that revolutionized world history, that brought into being some of the great marvels of the world. It was a class that gave us Shakespeare, Schiller, Goethe, Beethoven, and many more geniuses whose cultural productions have been cemented in the treasure troves of universal history. It was the class that revolutionized the forces of production like never before. As Marx and Engels proclaimed, the bourgeois form of life “accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals.”[6]

But that class, its revolutionary and creative edge, has dissipated. Corresponding to the new, highly financialized, usurious, and parasitic stage of imperialism in the post-war period, what Michael Hudson calls super imperialism, capitalism shows itself unable to provide real economic development.[7] Growth has been reduced to accumulation through rents, interest, and stock manipulation. This economic stagnation and degrowth of the real material forces of production corresponds and is reflected into a real stagnation and degrowth of cultural productions. From Shakespeare to porn novels, from Goethe to college student’s slam poetry, from Beethoven to Sexxy Red. This is bourgeois cultural degeneration, *the decaying from their class*, from the progressive, humanistic, and rational ideas of the early bourgeoisie.

The decline into irrationalism, which Georg Lukács located in the post-1848 world (intensified especially by the development of the imperialist stage of

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5. Ernesto Che Guevara, *Selected Works* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), 165.

6. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, Collected Works Vol. 6* (Moscow: Progress Publishers), 487.

7. Michael Hudson, *Super Imperialism: The Economic Strategy of American Empire* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

capitalism), is a form, in the philosophical domain, of the degeneration of the bourgeoisie and its form of life.[8] The transition from Hegel to Schopenhauer, and then Nietzsche, is a process through which the capitalist class undergoes a "decline from one's class," that is, from the enlightenment values of universal reason, progress, and humanism to the postmodern doctrine of the irrational, the historically static and reactionary, the anti and "post" human. In art, Frederic Jameson correctly diagnoses the "flatness or depthlessness, [the] new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense, [which is] perhaps the supreme formal feature of all the postmodernisms."[9] "Postmodern culture," Jameson argues, "is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror."[10]

To return to Golden Goose, is this not a clear depiction of irrationalism, or at least, of instrumental rationality (since, after all, the goal is still profit, a goal in which a form of 'reason' is definitely used) being employed in deeply irrational ways? Reason put at the service of unreason, of the irrational. A 'new' shoe that already comes destroyed and costs five times as much as a regular new shoe? How is this not the epitome of irrationalism in fashion, of calculated stupidity taking concrete form? As Marx wrote in a youthful letter to Arnold Ruge, "reason has always existed, but not always in a rational form."[11]

The hyper-inflated sign-value of this irrational commodity is a manifestation of bourgeois degeneracy, of the decay of the bourgeoisie from what its class once was, from the principles and values it comes into the historical scene affirming. The sign-value of this degeneracy is a reflection of the moribund and decaying character of the social order itself.

The fetish of the decaying experienced in fashion merely reflects the degenerate stage of a form of life with fetishism in its "cell form."[12] Here Lukács was absolutely correct, writing in *The Historical Novel* that "behind the decadence

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8. Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason* ((New York: Verso, 2021).

9. Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 9.

10. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 5.

11. Karl Marx, "Letter to Arnold Ruge, September 1843," *Marx-Engels Collected Works Vol. 3* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 143.

12. Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. 1* (New York: New Left Books, 1982), 90.

or the banal degeneracy one can always glimpse the general decline of the epoch."[13]

What the Baylor student was unable to see was that the phenomenon he was unable to understand was not necessarily a lack of reason on his part. The 'gap' wasn't between him and the world of fashion. The gap, the incompleteness, as Slavoj Žižek would say, is *in the world itself*.[14] *It is irrational*. *It is incomplete*. What the student felt she was missing to make sense of the trend was something that was missing *in the trend itself*.

The response to this cultural degeneracy cannot end simply in the reintegration of a communist sense of decency and respectability for oneself, others, and one's environment. While this is necessary *for communists*, the general phenomenon of cultural degeneracy cannot be surmounted unless the decaying form of life that produced it is itself overcome. Only socialism can return us to a higher form of decency, self-respect, and honor. To attack degeneracy without being ready to affirm the only alternative, the only way out of it, is as silly and infantile as thinking you'll be safe putting the fire out in one room while the rest of the house burns. No matter how much you put out the fire in that room, the whole house is burning, and sooner or later that room will be once again. The only escape from the wrath of the fire is to flee the house. The only escape from the bourgeois degeneracy so prevalent in our period of moribund imperialism is through overcoming the capitalist mode of life which engendered it.

Communists show the way forward!

13. Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 250.
14. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 36.

3

Work, Marx, and Spinoza: Interview with Jason Read

Jason Read[1]

What motivated you to bring Spinoza and Marx into dialogue on the politics of work, and what do you see as the central insight this pairing provides?

The question of Spinoza's relationship to Marx can be stretched back at least to the beginning of the twentieth century. For a large part this writing takes up either the question of the influence of Spinoza on Marx or the intersection of their thought around shared philosophical positions. Marx it is known, kept pages of notes on Spinoza, and Spinoza was influential to his philosophical milieu. With respect to the second, Spinoza and Marx both see human beings as part of nature, and understand our actions and our thoughts to be shaped by the natural and historical world we live in; in other words, they are both materialists.

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1. Jason Read is a professor of philosophy at the University of Southern Maine and the author of The Production of Subjectivity: Marx and Philosophy (2023), The Double Shift: Spinoza and Marx on the Politics of Work (2024), Unemployed Negativity: Fragments on Philosophy, Politics, and Culture (2024), and other texts. He blogs at unemployednegativity.com

I wanted to take up the question of Marx and Spinoza more concretely, with respect to a specific problem. Work struck me as the right problem for three reasons. Work, the selling of labor power, is the cornerstone of Marx's critique of capitalism. While Spinoza does not have much to say, at least directly, about work, his central concern is first and foremost how we strive to maintain our existence, and the way that striving can be captured by the dominant forces of society, so that we "fight for servitude as if it was salvation." This connects to Marx because the way in which we "make a living" in capitalism, reproduce our existence, also reproduces the conditions of our domination. Finally, I wanted to write about work because we are living in a moment in which the material rewards of work are diminishing, lower wages, less security, for jobs, but largely this has not led to a criticism of work, or even collective movements to confront working conditions, but a doubling down on the work ethic. Hustle and grind mindset cultures are our "fighting for servitude as if it was salvation."

How does the concept of the "double shift" operate as a theoretical lens in your analysis, and how does it connect to the lived experience of labor in contemporary society?

I use the concept of a double shift broadly to theorize the way in which something from one category or aspect of life carries over into another aspect or category, pulling a double. The first such double is economics and politics; that work which is part of economic life, integral to how we produce and reproduce our existence, is also central to political life. This can be seen not just in the calls for politicians to create jobs, but the way in which the hierarchy and discipline of labor relations becomes part of political life. The second double, which follows from this, is the way in which material existence becomes part of how we think about and understand the world. As Marx said, "life determines consciousness." The wage relation, selling our labor power in order to make a living, is not just part of our material lives, but it is part of our consciousness, shaping how we think and how we feel. At the same time, our actions are shaped by what we think and believe to be possible. This can be seen in the third double shift, the way our strategies, our ways for acting in the world, are shaped by the way that the world acts on us. In contemporary capitalism, it is work, working harder, faster, smarter, as an individual that is the only strategy that many imagine for improving their life. Collective action, solidarity, and political action are outside what many see, and thus outside of what many do.

In what ways do you think Spinoza's understanding of the imagination and ideology informs contemporary labor struggles and workers' consciousness?

Spinoza understands the imagination to be a confused amalgamation of the way something affects us, and what something is; when we imagine or when we contemplate an image, we unknowingly combine qualities of the thing with the way it affects us, or has affected us in the past. Then Spinoza goes onto write "The mind insofar as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the body's power of acting." This is a fundamentally ambivalent assertion, sometimes our imagination is in part correct, the things that we imagine actually help or aid us, we imagine that exercise will make us stronger, but sometimes we can be mistaken, we imagine that alcohol makes us funnier and more charming when we are actually obnoxious. To put this back in the context of work, and the point about the double shift above, the dominant imagination sees work, individual work and effort, as the only way to improve one's position in life. People believe that if they work hard, become a model employee, then their hard work will be recognized and rewarded. This "imaginary" of work has a powerful hold on people's desires and actions. It is reinforced by everything from the wage relation to the narratives and stories of success that permeate popular culture.

You reference popular culture in your book, such as Office Space and Better Call Saul. How do these examples illustrate your arguments about work and exploitation? In addition, how do motivational meetings at places like Apple Stores contribute to the illusion of liberation through work?

As is well known Breaking Bad is in some sense a show about the failures of work. A high school chemistry teacher realizes that his diagnosis of lung cancer will leave his family destitute when he dies. In that sense it is about the failures of work to provide the basic conditions of existence. However, it is not a show critical of work. What does Walter White, the Chemistry teacher do when he realizes that his work will not provide for his family, he works harder only now as "cook" of crystal meth. As much as this "breaks bad," breaking the law, he conforms to a higher law, the idea that if one works hard, is good at their job, they will find success and even revenge. This explains why White's alter ego, Heisenberg, has become a folk hero. Many popular films and movies that

purport to critique work ultimately reveal a deeper attachment to work. This is also true of Office Space in which the criticism of the world of office work is shown in the end to be a celebration of the honesty and integrity of manual labor.

The unique thing about Apple, a company which has an incredibly low rate of pay for the amount of money that goes through its stores, is that it uses brand identification, the loyalty of its customers, as a motivator. Apple consumers are often very loyal and identify with the brand even putting their stickers on cars and backpacks. In a way Apple treats its employees like consumers. In this way it is not that unique, our society, and especially the media, generally treats all issues in the economy in terms of how they will affect investors and consumers, in that order, rather than workers. We are told how a strike will affect the stock market and the price of consumer goods, rather than what it is trying to do for workers.

Can you explain the concept of “negative solidarity” and how it manifests in modern workplaces?

Alex Williams defined negative solidarity as “an aggressively enraged sense of injustice, committed to the idea that, because I must endure increasingly austere working conditions (wage freezes, loss of benefits, declining pension funds, erasure of job security and increasing precarity) then everyone else must too.” This often manifests itself in hostility towards workers who have any protections or benefits, often won through collective action. One prevalent example is the hostility shown towards teachers, who have protections of seniority and time off. There is a strategy since at least Reagan as dividing workers between public workers, who have higher union involvement, and workers in the private sector. The latter are seen as real workers precisely because of their disorganization and isolation. There is a strange sort of solidarity in this, but one that takes work as necessarily onerous and difficult, something that one endures as an individual. Anyone who is seen as not working, or not working hard enough is seen as suspect. It is a solidarity that can only be negative, can only dismantle actual solidarity, and one that strives to make working conditions worse not better.

4

The Great Patriotic War and the Struggle Against Historical Revisionism

Christopher Helali[1]

Speech given on January 31, 2025 at the Volgograd Region Celebration of the 82nd Anniversary of the Soviet Victory over the Nazi Invaders in the Battle of Stalingrad.

Dearest Comrades and Friends,

Early in the morning on January 31st, 1943, the newly appointed *Generalfeldmarschall* Friedrich Paulus awakened from his slumber to find the Red Army at his door. Preparations were made for a surrender, which Paulus would later deny ever giving. However, on February 2nd, 1943, the last of the Nazi invaders in Stalingrad surrendered to the heroic Red Army. The guns fell silent. After over six months of the largest, fiercest, and bloodiest battles the world has ever seen, the Soviet Union was victorious.

1. Christopher Helali is the International Secretary of the American Communist Party and Chair of the USA branch of the International Movement of Russophiles (MIR).

News of this tremendous victory traveled far and wide. Across the Atlantic, President of the United States of America, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, sent a telegram to Stalin which stated,

> *As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States of America, I congratulate you on the brilliant victory at Stalingrad of the armies under your Supreme Command. The one hundred and sixty-two days of epic battle for the city which has forever honored your name and the decisive result which all Americans are celebrating today will remain one of the proudest chapters in this war of the peoples united against Nazism and its emulators. The commanders and fighters of your armies at the front and the men and women, who have supported them in factory and field, have combined not only to cover with glory their country's arms, but to inspire by their example fresh determination among all the United Nations to bend every energy to bring about the final defeat and unconditional surrender of the common enemy.*[2]

A few weeks later on February 23, 1943, the 25th anniversary of the Red Army, President Roosevelt sent a telegram congratulating the Red Army for its "magnificent achievements unsurpassed in all history."[3] After the "immortal battle of Stalingrad," Roosevelt goes on to state that the "Red Army and the Russian people have surely started the Hitler forces on the road to ultimate defeat and have earned the lasting admiration of the people of the United States."[4]

The Soviet victory at Stalingrad completely changed the course of the Great Patriotic War. Historians on both sides of the Atlantic agree that the Battle of Stalingrad was the most important and decisive battle in the entire Second World War. Stalingrad was the axial point of the entire war.[5] So decisive was

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2. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Congratulations to Marshal Stalin on the Russian Victory at Stalingrad," The American Presidency Project, January 31, 2025, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/209576.

3. J. V. Stalin, "F. Roosevelt to J. V. Stalin [No. 77]," Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. Volume 2: Correspondence with Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman (August 1941-December 1945), February 23, 1943, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/correspondence/02/43.htm.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Scroll from US President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the city of Stalingrad," Stalin – Churchill – Roosevelt: The Common Struggle Against Fascism [Federal Archival Agency of the Russian Federation], January 31, 2025, https://alliance.rusarchives.ru/scroll-us-president-franklin-d-roosevelt-city-stalingrad-17-may-1944.

the victory that King George the VI of the United Kingdom commanded that a sword be forged to honor the Soviet defenders of Stalingrad. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill presented this sword to Stalin during the Tehran Conference on November 29, 1943. Likewise, on May 25, 1944, President Roosevelt had two scrolls sent to Stalin for the cities of Leningrad and Stalingrad which had "the wholehearted admiration of the American people."[6] Roosevelt goes on to say that the "heroism of the citizens of these two cities and the soldiers who so ably defended them has not only been an inspiration to the people of the United States, but has served to bind even more closely the friendship of our two nations."[7] Lastly, he states that both "Stalingrad and Leningrad have become synonyms for the fortitude and endurance which has enabled us to resist and will finally enable us to overcome the aggression of our enemies."[8] This goodwill between the United States and the Soviet Union, born out of an alliance against fascism and the horrors of war, would quickly give way to suspicion, fear, and confrontation after the war's conclusion.

This year we not only celebrate the 82nd Anniversary of the Soviet Victory over the Nazi Invaders in the Battle of Stalingrad but the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Soviet People during the Great Patriotic War. What should be a moment to deepen the shared commitment to immortalizing the heroic peoples who defeated fascism, and to building a world of peace and friendship, is unachievable given the hostile attitudes of Western governments. This is notable in the recent commemorations for the 80th Anniversary of D-Day in Normandy in 2024 and the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz in 2025 where the Russian Federation was not invited to participate.

Adding insult to injury, the ongoing campaign of historical revisionism in the West has reached new heights.[9] The ongoing effort to distort, misrepresent, and outright lie about the historical record shows the depths some will go who harbor anti-communist, anti-Soviet, and/or Russophobic beliefs. It is clear that not only the rehabilitation, but the outright heroization of Nazi collaborators in

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6. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Letter from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Joseph Stalin on the presentation of scrolls to Stalingrad and Leningrad with an expression of the admiration of the American people for the cities' heroism," Stalin – Churchill – Roosevelt: The Common Struggle Against Fascism [Federal Archival Agency of the Russian Federation], January 31, 2025, https://alliance.rusarchives.ru/letter-franklin-d-roosevelt-joseph-stalin-presentation-scrolls-stalingrad-and-leningrad-25-may-1944.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, "75th Anniversary of the Great Victory: Shared Responsibility to History and our Future," President of Russia, June 19, 2020, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63527.

countries like Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia is extremely inflammatory and provocative.[10] The ongoing destruction of monuments that commemorate the Great Patriotic War and the heroism of the Soviet Red Army in the Baltic states, Ukraine, and even Bulgaria are shameful and unforgiveable acts. These assaults on the collective memory of the war dead are aimed at erasing the heroic achievements of the Soviet people. The lines of demarcation are also clear from the recent United Nations General Assembly vote on the resolution on combatting the glorification of Nazism.[11] The European Union continues to pass resolutions that equate fascism with communism and blames the Soviet Union for starting the Second World War. President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin has made it clear that "placing the Nazis and the Communists before WWII on the same level and dividing responsibility between them equally is absolutely unacceptable. It is a lie."[12]

Given that I am a history teacher, let me provide a personal example of this historical revisionism in the United States. When I was teaching a unit on World War II, I showed a short approximately 15-minute video on what happened on the Eastern Front in World War II. This video clip, from Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick's *The Untold History of the United States* provides a good overview of the Great Patriotic War, the immense sacrifice of the Soviet people, and their heroism in defeating Nazism. When I shared this clip with my colleagues, I was told that this was "Russian propaganda." I respectfully responded that this was historically accurate. However, some colleagues claimed that the numbers and role of the Soviet Union were greatly inflated due to ongoing Russian disinformation. Shocked by this ignorance, I advised my colleagues to read the history once again and to learn about the fact that the Soviet Union had already turned the tide at Stalingrad, over a year before the allies would land in Normandy on D-Day. However, the Hollywood propaganda machine continues to emphasize that it was the United States and the United Kingdom that were the real victors. Films like *Saving Private Ryan*

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10. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, "Address to the President of Ukraine Victor Yushchenko," President of Russia, August 13, 2009, http://en.special.kremlin.ru/supplement/4938.

11. General Assembly, "Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance," United Nations, November 27, 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/456. Draft Resolution: https://docs.un.org/en/A/C.3/79/L.2.

12. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, "Valdai Discussion Club meeting: Vladimir Putin took part in a plenary session of the 18th annual meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club," President of Russia, October 21, 2021, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66975. Also see: Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, "Valdai Discussion Club session: Vladimir Putin spoke at the final plenary session of the 16th meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club," President of Russia, October 3, 2019, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61719.

are part of an ongoing mythology that portrays the United States as the liberator of Europe and the "free world." President Vladimir Vladimirovich recounted the history perfectly well at the Valdai conference in 2021 when he responded to a journalist's question saying,

> *Firstly, it was Germany that attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, and not vice versa, and secondly, let us not forget who stormed Berlin. Was it the Americans, the British or the French? No, it was the Red Army. Have you forgotten this? It is easy to recall, for it is an obvious fact. As many as 1.1 million of our people died in the Battle of Stalingrad alone. How many casualties can Britain claim? 400,000. And the United States, less that 500,000. A total of 75 percent, and probably even 80 percent of the German military potential was destroyed by the Soviet army. Are you a little rusty on this? No, you are not rusty at all. These events are being used to deal with the current internal political matters in an opportunistic manner. This is wrong, because nothing good will come of manipulating history. At the very least, this does not promote mutual understanding, which we need so badly now.*[13]

President Vladimir Vladimirovich has proclaimed 2025 the "Year of the Defender of the Fatherland."[14] Let us continue to honor and pay tribute to the tens of millions of Soviets who perished during the Great Patriotic War and the millions more who heroically fought and returned to rebuild their country. Let us continue to teach the truth about the Great Patriotic War. Only by teaching the truth, and by honoring the sacrifice of tens of millions of people, will future generations know the price paid for peace and the need to safeguard it.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, "Executive Order on the Year of the Defender of the Fatherland," President of Russia, January 16, 2025, http://en.kremlin.ru/acts/news/76120. Also see: Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, "New Year Address to the Nation," President of Russia, December 31, 2024, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/76073.

5

The Dialectical Function of The Communist Manifesto in the Historical Process

Giannetto Edoardo (Nanni) Marcenaro[1]

"The struggle against the fragmentation of the working class is at the same time the struggle against national or racial prejudices"[2]

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1. Giannetto Edoardo Marcenaro, a.k.a Nanni is an Italian philosopher, independent researcher in philosophy and political economy, who finances his research by his own wage labor. He holds a degree in Philosophy of Science and is a member of the Centro Studio Nazionale "Domenico Losurdo", annexed to the Movimento per la Rinascita Comunista in Italy. He collaborates with several organizations and is author of some fifteen books (self-published), among which six (out of seven) volumes of a *General Description of Thought*, and a whole *General Commentary to □ριστοτέλης* in seven more volumes recently completed, besides a two-volume *Premise to the Critical Analysis of Political Economy,* title *Value and Knowledge*.

2. Domenico Losurdo, *Introduzione,* to Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista* (Roma-Bari: Gius. Laterza & figli, 1999) xxiv. Translations from Italian by the author.

1. Introduction

The 175th anniversary of the publication of the Communist Manifesto falls in an era in which the development of the historical process, on the one hand, has demonstrated how –despite the triumphant proclamations of the liberals following the dissolution of the Soviet Union– socialism and the Marxist-Leninist ideology are alive and well, and have acquired more strength and wealth than they ever created before, especially in the People's Republic of China, and on the other hand, marked in the West the beginning of a profound crisis of credibility, diffusion, and rooting in the populations of the various European states, for those same movements and thoughts.

The last thirty years have seen a downsizing, not far from a complete erasure from the political landscape in the capitalist West, of communist or socialist formations whose influence on society and national cultures, despite the continuous deterioration of living and working conditions, has been increasingly reduced, under the constant and systematic attack of historical revisionism and the incessant counter-waves of mass cultural products.

The capitalist class was able to take the initiative in the absence of any constraint and transform the whole of society in its own image and likeness, separating the political aspects of social relations from those of identity, so as to isolate “individual” and “society”, defusing therefore any revolutionary scope of the so-called “civil” rights movements, and transporting the economic issues as a whole on the terrain of the “celestial” mechanics of the “free market”, with the subtle means of the Keynesian rhetoric of “companies” and “families”, in which any notion of social or class conflict vanishes and the only perspective on the horizon of events is that of the Thatcherite “there is no alternative”: it is only permitted to vainly appeal to a glimmer of hope that “another capitalism” is possible.

In such a context, as in Marx and Engels’ epoch the working population is increasingly “a simple set of single individuals” devoid of any cohesion or awareness of their social function, due to of the incessant, even violent, laceration of the social fabric, in which “the triumph of employers' “despotism” is consecrated” –with new categories of employment contract, in increasingly precarious conditions, left to the will of the “entrepreneur”– and “the reforms carried out through the movement from below [...] can be undone”,[3] as we have

3. Ibid.

witnessed, and still we're seeing today, particularly in Italy, with the neoliberal assault on the few surviving remnants of the mixed economy that characterized many Western countries after World War II.

Today the government of the capitalist class appears to reign unchallenged in the West, and no political force seems capable of opposing the imperialist and neocolonial dynamics that are raging over these countries, enslaved to the will of US capital, while no significant jolt of political awareness, aspiring to question the powers-that-be, can be glimpsed in the population.

It is therefore possible that a brief analysis of what Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels say in the Manifesto –a document which in its deepest essence is precisely a heartfelt appeal to overthrow the capitalist system– simultaneously reflecting, just as briefly, on what the development of history has shown us since then, would offer our intellect useful elements for a more integral and dialectical understanding of today's situation and its roots.

2. Fragmentation and union of the revolutionary subject

First of all, it should be noted that Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto* are primarily concerned with *identifying* and *clearly defining* the revolutionary subject: the sector of society which, as a class, can and must form itself into a unitary block aware of its function and magnitude, actively assuming a political *but also* a social role, decisive in influencing the social trends in progress which establish the direction taken by a country.

In this sense, the analysis they brought ahead leads them to conclude that, at that time, "of all the classes that [...] confront the bourgeoisie, only the proletariat is a truly revolutionary class", since it is "the [...] more authentic product" of the "big industry" from whose development the bourgeoisie draws its profit, while "the other classes decay and set"[4] with it: this is because the "proletariat" is the class that puts for sale one's "labor power" as a commodity, as a means of production at the disposal of the capitalist, which he uses as "wage labour". The latter on its own turn is the "condition [of the existence] of capital"[5].

The bourgeoisie, in order to obtain the maximum profit from its entrepreneurial activity, is willing to create the best conditions so that in the production and

4. Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista* (Roma-Bari: Gius. Laterza & figli, 1999), 20.
5. Ibid., 23.

trade of the products in its availability it finds itself in the most advantageous position with respect to the buyer, or its competitor: for this it needs to beat as low as possible a price for the means of production which enable the goods to be realized.

Furthermore, since the capitalist production system is based on “modern bourgeois private property”, i.e. the private ownership of the means of production, for which a separation is created between producers and products, between workers and the result of the work performed by them, and the only “property” of the latter is none other than their “labour-power”, to the extent that “wage labour, the work of the proletarian [does not] provide […] to the latter a property”[6], all of these “are forced to sell themselves to the minute” and therefore be exposed “to all the vicissitudes of competition”[7] among the workers, on which the same “wage labor is based exclusively”[8].

Competition is a principle that creates isolation among workers: since the *only* way for them to survive is to work, the unemployed worker –if he does not have a sufficient reserve of exchange-value with which he can meet his needs in the period in which he does not receive a wage– will always be ready, in order to earn anything, to accept a *lower* compensation than another worker to do the same job, thus creating the ideal conditions for the realization of the maximum profit by the capitalist and of the *fragmentation* of the working class.

In fact, in a system of competition between workers, everyone thinks for himself, without realizing that he is thus strengthening the position of the one who exploits him, and indeed often without even realizing that *he is being exploited*: in fact, wage labor, as such, is by definition performed by a “free” individual, not a slave. It's not at all forced labor.

This fits spontaneously into the so-called ”liberal” tradition of Western thought, whereby “the level of wages and working conditions refer to a contract freely agreed between the parties”, so that “modern worker slavery” can “immediately vanish into a sphere considered devoid of any political relevance”. The gloomy and ferocious reality of the ruthless exploitation suffered, according to a character of the caliber of Edmund Burke, in fact is nothing but “a semblance, which does not substantially affect the reality of freedom as a 'common

6. Ibid., 27
7. Ibid., 15.
8. Ibid., 23.

blessing'" of which in his opinion "not even the most miserable"[9] can be said to be stripped of.

A position that expresses in its essence the liberal tradition as a whole, based on the selective reading of events and their hagiographic and sweetened narration, so structured as to build a *completely* falsified history, through which it's accomplished a systematic mystification of the real scale of the monstrosity of colonialism; of the magnitude and conscious mechanism of the systematic looting of the peoples of the South of the world; of the corrupt and degenerate ideology which pervades the liberal mind and which it has justified without any scruple, on the basis of the perverse conviction of the superiority of Western culture and European, i.e. white, populations over all the others, the massacre, the reduction into slavery, up to the real and proper extermination, of entire peoples, such as the First Nations of the American continent, whose erasure from the face of the Earth was nothing more than the first phenomenal form in which liberalism showed its purest essence, nourishment of the ground in which Nazism would later be cradled in the twentieth century.

In the first pages of the *Manifesto*, the two authors observe, correctly, that where the bourgeoisie had obtained power, "it placed the *only* freedom in unscrupulous trade", introducing in this way, "in place of exploitation veiled by religious and political illusions […] open, shameless, direct and dry exploitation"[10], imposed by the categorical imperative of maximum profit.

However, this requires a progressive increase in the scale of production, and therefore an ever greater number of workers employed in industry, whereby the proletariat "is concentrated in increasingly more imposing masses" with the result that "its strength grows and *it feels it more and more*"[11]: in this way the workers begin to associate in "coalitions against the bourgeoisie and unite to defend their wages", but "the real result of their struggles is not immediate success but *their union*, which spreads more and more"[12], and that is the progressive formation of a consciousness and a class movement that leads to political and social struggle against the class of the owners of the means of production.

Obviously, we are dealing with a *dialectical* movement here, since the progress of this union is "facilitated by the ever-expanding means of communication", as

9. Losurdo, *Introduzione,* xii-xiii
10. Marx, Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista*., 9.
11. Ibid., 17, emphasis mine.
12. Ibid., 18.

well as by modern means of transport, which make it possible to accomplish "in a few years" what for the "citizens of the Middle Ages […] took centuries" to realize, but both of these means, as well as the proletariat itself, "are produced by big industry"[13] in its impetuous development, "of which the bourgeoisie is the involuntary and passive vehicle"[14]: from the development of the productive forces, according to the modalities of the progress of technical and scientific knowledge, two *opposite* elements are produced, as main aspects of the main contradiction in the capitalist system –bourgeoisie and proletariat– which emerge simultaneously, although each responds to its own internal dynamics.

3. The apparent avoidability of revolution

For Marx and Engels therefore "it clearly appears that the bourgeoisie is no longer able to remain the *dominant* class of society", since by reducing those whose work it must profit from, to the most abject misery, it is not even "able to guarantee the *life* of its own slave", so that "the existence of the bourgeoisie is no longer compatible with society". Therefore, from their point of view, "its decline and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable". According to Marx and Engels, *already* in their time, "society can no longer live under its *domination*"[15], that of the bourgeoisie.

The two clearly explain the reasons why this must be the situation at the time they wrote, in the first part emphasizing in particular the dehumanization and assimilation to a "simple accessory to the machine" suffered by the wage laborer, causing his salary to steadily descend with each innovation, each of which makes his tasks more and more mechanical and *less skilled*, so that he finds himself "without property" except for his own labor-power and progeny, and he's not even granted "those conditions which allow [him] to lead his miserable servile life"[16], in a society that does not care in the least about him or his peers, standing "on the denial of earthly happiness and of the very meaning of life for the majority of the planetary population"[17].

But it is in the second part that their rhetorical technique takes on a completely peculiar character that deserves to be briefly analyzed, since after having

13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., 23.
15. Ibid., 22-23, emphasis mine.
16. Ibid., 15, 20, and 22.
17. Losurdo, *Introduzione*, xliii.

outlined in broad terms "the theoretical positions of the communists"[18] and having examined "the two terms […] of the antagonism between capital and wage labour"[19], there begins a long section in which the two authors address *directly* the capitalists, the bourgeois class, discussing "the objections of the bourgeoisie against communism" both with respect to "appropriation and production of material goods", and with respect to that of "spiritual goods"[20] following the revolution, which in those passages is no longer simply *proletarian*, but becomes specifically "communist" and which is "the most radical rupture with traditional property relations", so that "in its development the most radical break with traditional ideas takes place"[21].

At the moment in which "the class struggle approaches the decisive moment", in fact, the "dominant" class is dissolving due to its own internal contradictions and "thus now a part of the bourgeoisie passes over to the proletariat", that is, that part, the "ideologists", which has come "to theoretically understand the historical movement as a whole"[22]: this would imply that "in the heart of the old society the elements of a new one have been formed", for which "the dissolution of the old conditions of life goes hand in hand with the dissolution of old ideas"[23].

But it is clear that in the terms in which the issue is outlined, those "bourgeois ideologues" who understood "theoretically the historical movement as a whole", can only be *Marx and Engels themselves* –both of whom were part of the "bourgeoisie", one way or another, or had been such– and those who intended to follow in their wake.

Furthermore, the two authors present, in the *Manifesto*, the question of the revolution of the proletariat which "cannot rise up, cannot stand on its feet, without blowing up the whole [...] official society" (ibid.) as a fact which is about to take place since "Germany is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution" and this revolution "can only be the *immediate* prelude to a proletarian revolution"[24] which however is configured only as first step of the "communist" revolution.

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18. Marx, Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista*, 26.
19. Ibid., 27.
20. Ibid., 35 and 30.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 20.
23. Ibid., 34.
24. Ibid., 56, emphasis mine.

The *Communist Manifesto* was published in February 1848: and in fact, only a few weeks went by before riots and revolutionary uprisings erupted throughout the European subcontinent, assuming, in particular in Germany, precisely the character evoked by Marx and Engels, retraced in the series of articles from 1851-52 for the *New York Tribune* later published under the title of "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany".

The uprisings of 1848, however, fail in the medium term, and the concrete reality of a "bourgeois" revolution in Germany will still have to wait for almost seventy years, when in 1919, at the end of the First World War, on the last worn out vestiges of the "ancient régime", the Weimar Republic will be founded. It will finally unite large portions of the territory of the defunct Second Reich in a nation-state governed by institutions founded on the sovereignty of the people (whose fate and notorious successor we know all-too-well).

But all this will not be sufficient to produce in Germany, nor in any other Western European country which already from the first part of the 19th century onwards had had statutes and constitutions while remaining "monarchies"[25], nor in the multiple-Republics' France, that proletarian revolution which the two authors of the Manifesto hoped for and which they believed would have *necessarily* imposed itself in the conditions realized by the development of industry which the "domination" of the bourgeoisie would bring about.

This means that when Marx and Engels say that "laws, morals, religion are for [the proletarian] so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which so many bourgeois interests are hidden"[26], this cannot in fact be a statement based on an *objective* assessment of the material conditions given in the concrete situation, experienced, in those countries at the time, but, at best, an optimistic overstatement that turns out to be unfounded, and in the worst case, instead, it's only the projection of the awareness of the two authors regarding these elements of the superstructure, on that of the mass of workers, who instead, of course, had been raised, educated, and taught, by the institutions and in the beliefs of what *Marx and Engels* in effect saw as nothing more than "bourgeois prejudices".

The fact that the event envisaged by them in the *Manifesto* as "inevitable" under the conditions *already* given has never occurred was simultaneously one

25. e.g. Sweden, Norway, and Belgium, as well as the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Sardinia in 1848, and Denmark in 1849.

26. Ibid., 21.

of the main factors, in the erosion of the *credibility* of the thought that such a prediction presupposes, and in the emergence and of so-called Western "Marxism" –dialectical development of the consequent affirmation of Marxism-Leninism and of the success of communist strategies and revolutions in the East– which, as a secondary aspect of the contradiction between colonialism and anti-colonialism, intended to deny the socialist and Marxist character of the entire Eastern revolutionary experience.

4. The transition of the capitalist class in Europe from dominant to ruling

It is therefore perfectly clear and evident that the factor not considered by Marx and Engels in the elaboration of the arguments exposed in the *Manifesto* is the one that will instead be distinguished and defined by Antonio Gramsci in the following century, namely the *cultural hegemony* of the class which in a country holds the ownership of the means of production and with the latter it also holds political power: and it is precisely because of this predominant position that it is able to exercise an almost *absolute* control over the entire population, where the organization of the State is such as to capillary intercept the intellectual formation of every citizen.

Marx and Engels in fact repeat several times, as highlighted above, that the class that controls political power is "dominant", and that the "working class" must conquer its "domination" over society, before abolishing "the conditions of existence of class antagonism […] and therefore also its own class domination"[27]: from what they then consider to be the attitude of the "proletarian" towards bourgeois cultural institutions, it is clear that they do not take into account that factor. But can a class conquer and maintain the "domination" of society, where it does not also place itself as a *ruling* class, that is, hegemonic? The problem, it is clear, had to arise essentially also for the *bourgeoisie* at that time.

After all, until the contemporary era this function of *direction* of society, whose work provided the necessary material to establish hegemony, was mainly carried out by religious institutions, for example with the teaching of catechism to the popular masses, which made it possible to control the intellectual formation of the workers without it being necessary to teach them to read and

27. Ibid., 37.

write: and that is, by imposing on them a very precise *vision-of-the-world* transmitted through symbolic figures and exemplary episodes –that is, a transcendental image determined by empirical contents whose internal and external relationships provide the mind with a value and a sense of its own being in its existential understanding– depriving them of the intellectual tools necessary for its critical analysis and discussion of its epistemological foundations.

In the beginning this situation was also perfectly suited to the purposes of the bourgeois class in exercising its functions of "dominion": for the production system that had developed during the First Industrial Revolution, the psychic subjection of the working class imposed by the "traditions" of European "civilization" produced an individual disposition perfectly inclined to tolerate the "petty, odious, exasperating despotism"[28] exercised with "the regimentation of the employed"[29], whom, on the other hand, is required to perform "only an extremely simple, monotonous, very easy to learn manual operation"[30]. Just like the serf in the feudal production system, neither the worker in the capitalist system needs to know how to read and write to carry out his job, nor does he need to develop or exercise his spontaneous faculties of reasoning, reflection, and critical thinking.

However, the introduction of that "open, shameless exploitation" rather than "veiled by religious and political illusions" produced a contradiction in the dynamics of social hegemony, and by promoting the *union* of the working class, showed to the latter the intrinsic conflict, not so much *between itself and the bourgeoisie,* as between the explicit character of the capitalist production system and the feudal world-view that had been sold to it.

The manufacturing industrial production system, which in any case had been the means for the overthrow of the social order based on the feudal relationships of production, could certainly be blamed and criticized, and by the working class, also starting from the teachings and notions provided by the "traditional" forms of thought, i.e. those that the communist revolution should have erased.

For this reason, during the course of the 19th century many forms of association and thought –which Marx and Engels enumerate in the third part of the *Manifesto*– within the working class or about it, emerged in an ever more

28. Ibid., 16.
29. Losurdo, *Introduzione*, xxiii.
30. Marx, Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista*, 15.

overwhelming way among which, without any of them ever questioning the established order, some tried to dogmatically reconcile the destructive conflict of the terms of contradiction, while others were openly reactionary, opposed to the development of industry, obliquely primitivist, often in an attempt to "give Christian asceticism a hand of socialist veneer"[31], positions that later on prospered greatly, and still nowadays, mainly in Italy.

These currents of thought are not revolutionary in any case, and their dialectical function is to defuse the social tensions that the affirmation of the capitalist system brings with itself, and which set the conditions, those set forth by Marx and Engels, for which the overthrow of the "domination" of the bourgeoisie becomes "inevitable", but at the same time with the ambition to limit this "domination" and maintain unchanged the prerogatives and the political-social strength of the ousted dominant classes, *and yet still ruling*.

The explicit appearance of the reality of that contradiction therefore *calls into question* the domination of the bourgeoisie, of course, since this hegemony was the one which *previously* guaranteed the domination of the feudal classes, although in the context of a limited development of the capitalist system the bourgeoisie too could make use of them. Whereas *in fact* the "dominant" class is not able to ensure to the oppressed class "at least those conditions that allow it to lead its miserable servile life"[32] it is certainly legitimate to ask whether that "dominant" class is in fact adequate for this function in society: failing to ensure these conditions indeed means setting those of the overthrow of the entire social order, which precisely Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto* prospect the impending occurrence.

Therefore, it couldn't suffice the mere domination of society, the imposition of a social order by means of the monopoly of the use of force and the violent repression of popular and workers' movements, with the hypocritical and false justification of exploitation with the argument of freedom, in Burke's way, in which "the [...] law is only the will of the [...] [capitalist] class raised to law"[33], but it was also required to renew the character, the magnitude, and the breath of the hegemonic narrative, so that the bourgeois class could constitute itself properly as the "ruling class" of society, and therefore produce in turn, not only a novel production system, but also a "new" *society* in which to assert its *hegemony* in a distinct way, completely different from the previous one, which

31. Ibid., 41.
32. Ibid., 22.
33. Ibid., 31.

was essentially based on *the ideal of deprivation from pleasure and abundance*: the strictly *dialectical* nature of these dynamics cannot be hidden in the slightest from the eye of the attentive reader.

On the other hand, is it possible to overlook the fact that when Charles Darwin published his "The Origins of Species" in 1859, almost all Europeans and their overseas descendants firmly believed in one or another version of the myth contained in the "sacred" texts of Christian religion? And that for centuries the "domination" and hegemony of the feudal classes had been based on these texts, through *both* of which they had effectively exercised *political* power, decisively orienting the opinions of the vast majority of individuals, all the while keeping unchanged the established order and its own class social privileges?

However, neither is it possible to pass over in silence that in that same year 1859, in England, according to the surveys carried out by David Cressy, the percentage of males and females able to affix a signature to the declarations of the ecclesiastical courts exceeded 70% and the 60% respectively.[34] The first edition of Darwin's text, 1,250 copies, sold out on its first day of sales, and a second edition of 3,000 was printed the following year. The book by the English scholar, unlike that of Marx and Engels, saw as much as *six editions* in just thirteen years, as well as being published in the United States as early as 1860, and being translated into the main European languages by the end of the 1870s. According to the author himself, as he declares in his autobiography, "up to now (1876) sixteen thousand copies have been sold in England"[35].

Moreover, as many as 500 copies of the first edition were purchased by Mudie's Library, a private library, which lent books one volume at a time, against payment of an annual subscription, which Darwin himself had used for the studies necessary to write his book, and which allowed a wide circulation of the works. This type of library existed widely in the United Kingdom at the time, but due to their cost they remained a service dedicated above all to the wealthier classes.

In the same period of time, however, during the second half of the 19th century, following the approval of a specific law in 1850, a public library system was

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34. David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

35. Barlow, Nora ed. *The autobiography of Charles Darwin 1809-1882. With the original omissions restored. Edited and with appendix and notes by his grand-daughter Nora Barlow* (London: Collins, 1958), 122.

progressively established which did not include any fees for consulting or borrowing books. It was open to everybody, and in turn Marx also made use of it when, exiled in England, he was able to take advantage of the vast collection of the British Museum Library for his research on political economy: also in this case to the attentive reader cannot escape the deep dialectical materialist essence of such events.

This process of progressive extension of the diffusion and circulation of literature and knowledge, albeit limited by the relatively low literacy, is evidently a completely *antithetical* movement to that in which, for centuries, knowledge had been jealously guarded by the ruling classes, and a similar argument can be made for the gradual establishment of large-scale education systems, controlled by the state, or private, but removed from the direct influence of religious institutions.

In fact, on the one hand, the bourgeois class itself increased in number, and intended to educate its offspring according to an ideology which *certainly* was not that of the feudal classes, or which, in any case, was imparted by exponents of those classes, and on the other hand, with the growing sophistication of production techniques, as well as of bureaucratic, administrative and managerial systems, a gradual general increase in the valorization of the workforce (i.e. in the education and training of workers) was very slowly seen as necessary.

These measures, observed under the lens of dialectical materialism, openly reveal themselves as the strategy of the bourgeois class to wrest the *leadership* of society from the feudal classes, promoting a clear detachment from previous habits, necessary to spread one's vision-of-the-world, making it take root in the population, and gain hegemony, in the same way as the ending of restrictions on apprenticeships in medieval guilds had helped to overthrow the feudal economic system.

But at the same time, in the context of the historical period in which they fit, they are in turn the origin of a movement that is contradictory to this same strategy to conquer hegemony by the capitalist class, which causes a sector of “ideologues” to detach themselves from the bourgeoisie, still largely tied to traditional ideas, and pass to the proletariat, fueling the resonance of workers' struggles and the merciless and shameless brutality of exploitation under the “domination” of the bourgeoisie.

Along this path, within the “bourgeois ideologues”, the former “young Hegelians” of the left, a vision ripens that is diametrically, *radically* opposite to that which they had been taught and under whose lens they had been educated, trained, and induced to observe any phenomenon and which called itself with the names of “religion”, “metaphysics”, “idealism”, even “absolute”, and of course “creation” of the whole universe by the “unique deity” by means of its own free voluntary act: *they therefore spontaneously accepted those positions that they perceived as contrary to such a world-view.*

However, the latter were those that emerged *within* the bourgeois class, in the first phenomenal appearance of its tortuous path of *apparent* intellectual emancipation from the hegemony of the feudal classes, namely those of individuals such as Darwin, precisely, or Herbert Spencer and Lewis H. Morgan, all of whom were far from affirming any “socialist” idea, and who, in one way or another, accepted a form of belief in the ”traditional” thought of European civilization, branding peoples of color and of the South of the world at most as “good savages”, who can be educated in the ways of civilization while remaining essentially inferior to the whites, even if one cannot escape the fact, according to Morgan, that “there are only two means of saving the Indian from his impending doom” (i.e. annihilation) that is “education and Christianity”[36]. This shouldn't surprise us in the least, since after all the bourgeois class cannot deny that mental structure, i.e. dogmatic thought and the determinations of the relations existing between the vision-of-the-world’s elements underlying that thought, necessarily established once its fundamental premises are placed, without renouncing its “dominion” over society, since it is based on such “hegemonic thought”.

Therefore, that same *formal* structure, as a *unity*, assumes opposite but equivalent terms, whose transcendental identity is revealed in the course of the development of that certain peculiar thought in the historical process, so that at the beginning it appears as a contradictory aspect of the *thesis* in opposition to which it arises –and that is the *feudal, metaphysical, idealistic* vision-of-the-world– but following the elaboration of those terms, it becomes evident that the principle on which it is based, as an *antithesis* of the previous thought, is the same, and manifests itself as a vision-of-the-world, yes *bourgeois*, and *materialistic*, and yet equally as before, as Lenin pointed out with great acumen, *metaphysical*, that is, in more precise terms, ”hyperphysical”.

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36. Lewis Henry Morgan, *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois* (Rochester: Sage & Brother, 1851), 447.

It is logically excluded, therefore, that the "dominant ideas" for which "the most radical break with traditional ideas takes place", during the development of the "communist revolution", can be these latter, since this "break" will need to be formulated as a *synthesis* of the two previous stages, which productively summarizes those two positions in a new one *that denies them both*: yes, because the synthesis is certainly not the movement equivalent to the antithesis, otherwise *we would go back to the starting point*. It is the *accomplished dialectical overcoming* of the essential contradiction which has produced those two stages as its main aspects, the interaction of which has generated the principle of their own obsolescence.

5. Dialectical dynamics between bourgeois hegemony and labor aristocracy

Just as, therefore, the *Manifesto*, in its very genesis and characteristics, was a result of the productive interaction of the set of determining factors in society at the time, as opposing class tendencies, not limited to proletarians and bourgeois, but involving also, at least in England, the aristocracy and the clergy –in which a bitter clash was looming, which in effect has not yet seen a conclusion, and later took the form of the gap between "progressives" and "conservatives"– and its two authors derived from the works of bourgeois intellectuals tools and notions, the value of which, extracted by them for the benefit of *their own* theories, provided support for the embryonic form of that synthesis, it is just as much quite evident that the bourgeois class, the bourgeois intellectuals, have without doubt studied the *Manifesto* carefully, after 1872 –when the two authors took the opportunity of its presentation as *prosecution evidence* in the trial against Karl Liebknecht and August Bebel, to republish it in Germany, and the text began to have wider circulation– in order to *prevent* from happening what Marx and Engels predicted with absolute certainty.

The social and political situation in Europe, moreover, in the second half of the 19th century, continued to be explosive, and in the period in which the *Manifesto* began to be widely spread and studied, international geopolitical tensions were accumulating which, just barely kept at bay by the "Partition of Africa" after the 1883 Berlin Conference, would finally result in the First World War, at whose closing, the worst nightmare of the capitalists of the entire planet had materialized in the first State, and unique at that time in the world, *truly free and democratic,* the Soviet Union, founded precisely on the basis of the work and thought of the acute German man.

Nor would it make sense that the capitalist class had not taken an interest in *at least* this text, once the movements and political parties that invoked Marxism began to gain visibility, and with them also the *Manifesto*, precisely in the decades preceding the "imperialist massacre" of 1914-1918: on the one hand, for the brevity, incisiveness, and clarity with which it sets out the essential theoretical principles and the political-economic program that the communists intended to use as tools to fight the bourgeoisie –and thanks to which they said they *were sure* they would defeat it– and on the other hand precisely because, as noted above, it is addressing them *directly*. It is equally evident, however, that until the foundation of the first Workers 'and Peasants' State, on the ashes of the tsarist empire, this text was regarded more with ridicule than with fear, as instead its two authors hoped, and that only after the defeat of the colonialist armies in the Civil War of 1919-1922 its words were actually taken seriously.

The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* on the other hand –especially in its final part, where the two authors "openly declare" that the objectives of the Communists "can only be achieved with the *violent* overthrow of the whole social order", and suggest that the dominant classes, "let them tremble before a communist revolution"[37]– can only appear as a *challenge* that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels issued to the capitalist class as a whole, regarding all aspects of the organization of society, both from the point of view of material production, and from that of "spiritual production", because the latter "is transformed together with the material one"[38].

This passage shows the logical problem in Marx and Engels' argumentation highlighted in the previous section: since, if the "spiritual production", i.e. "the dominant ideas of an era", is modified contextually "to the material one", and the latter is modified following "[the] elevation of the proletariat to dominant class"[39], as a "first step" in that revolution, it is evident that, at the moment in which that first step is taken, that "spiritual production" cannot have *already* been transformed, and therefore, the "proletariat" could hardly have considered those beliefs and institutions, widespread and consolidated in the society of the time, as simple "bourgeois prejudices".

If we then read what Marx and Engels write at the end of the second part, in the list of "measures" that "for the most advanced countries can [...] be applied",[40]

37. Marx, Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista,* 57, emphasis mine.
38. Ibid., 34.
39. Ibid., 34-35.
40. Ibid., 36.

following the revolution in which the proletariat becomes the "dominant class", it becomes very clear the dynamic, apparently convoluted and paradoxical, for which the so-called "left" of the liberal parties, imbued with Western "Marxism", has often and willingly been accused of being "communist", in a completely absurd way, not ever having historically under any circumstances supported any of the *fundamental* premises and principles of socialist or Marxist-Leninist thought.

It is therefore perfectly consequent, in the light of what has been said, that in the immediate post-war period Western European countries involved in the conflict adopted a series of measures, once again, dialectically, completely antithetical to the methods of government that had been in force until then in those States, and that in the following three decades –pompously called the "Glorious Thirty Years"– a significant abundance of material goods spread in them, on the one hand, in the course of a deep infrastructural and productive modernization of the countries, and on the other hand in a radical transformation of customs and habits, in the unbridled development of an ever more extensive *consumer society*, and therefore of pleasures: *exactly what the previous hegemony kept segregated and banned.*

Just as it is consequent how of these measures the most significant ones –whose adoption and support by that "progressive" political faction were the origin of that dynamic– are also listed by Marx and Engels, each of which, although by no means integral to the proposal made by the latter once isolated from the others that define its scope precisely as *revolutionary*, rather than counter-revolutionary, it is, again and always dialectically, *also* functional to the purposes of the bourgeois class, to maintain both hegemony and domination, which amounts to say, to provide "at least those conditions" under which the wage worker can lead his own "servile life", and ensure that it does not *appear* at all as "miserable", that is, it is made tolerable.

A "highly progressive tax"[41], in fact, is undoubtedly an indispensable element in the superstructure of a socialist state, and yet even the bourgeois state can greatly benefit from it, where, for example, it wants to affect large concentrations of capital, or patrimonies, of the feudal classes, which can be mobilized, but which nevertheless are not invested, or to prevent, in a regime of semi-competition, a monopolistic centralization of production.

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41. Ibid.

In exactly the same way, the "centralization of credit in the hands of the State through a national bank with State capital and with an exclusive monopoly" on the issue of money, together with the "centralization of the means of transport in the hands of the State" and the "increase in the number of nationalized factories and instruments of production"[42] are naturally measures that are proper to the *essence* of socialist thought and the socialist State.

Yet at the same time it is clear that, especially when the *modernization* of a country begins –i.e., the construction of transport and communication infrastructures that cover the entire territory, the development of the supply and distribution of energy sources, the diffusion of uniform standards of measurement and currency to the entire population– the bourgeoisie will certainly want to favor such a centralization movement, to ensure that the State, drawing from the resources obtained through "strongly progressive taxes" –which in fact to a large extent are contributed by the working class, since the latter always represents the absolute majority (i.e. >90%) of the population– takes on its shoulders the task of carrying out such works, which are after all necessary for the capitalists to be able to carry out their business without hindrance or slowing down.

Finally, of course, if it is obvious that, to break the segregation of knowledge that guarantees the "domination" of the capitalists by imposing their "hegemony", the organization of a capillary system of "public and free education for all children" is indispensable –and consequently also the "abolition of child labor in factories"–[43] as already observed, the bourgeoisie also, with the development of the productive forces and a progressive transformation of the economy of a country towards the sector of services, above all in the increase of productive, administrative and social assistance activities by the State with that centralization, will intend to adopt such a strategy, which, moreover, will allow it to exercise a very strict control on the diffusion of the vision-of-the-world on whose grip its hegemony rests.

But then the fact that "it does not appear at all as "miserable" in the context of capitalist society under the hegemony of the bourgeois class does not at all mean "universalizing and making concrete the same negative freedom" that the bossy class has always claimed *exclusively* for itself, but is meant only to denote that life in which there are the means for the *consumption* of an increasing quantity of an ever-increasing number of categories of commodities,

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., 37.

which give the impression of *abundance.* The production, distribution, and consumption of said commodities, though, will result in the long term in concentration of more and more wealth and power into the hands of the class owning the means of production of those goods, constantly subtracting resources from the administration of those services which are provided by the State following that centralization, by means of which the foundations had been laid for the creation of a large sector of *labor aristocracy*.

The turning point in this story is the speech given by Harry S. Truman, president of the United States of America, on March 12th, 1947.[44]

Precisely at the end of his delirious invective against communism and the Soviet Union, in which in a questionable masterpiece of rhetorical mystification he is able to operate a complete reversal of the reality of the facts, attributing to the socialist system the "way of life" in which "the will of a minority [is] forcibly imposed on the majority", and which relies on "terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, rigged elections, and the suppression of personal liberties"[45], i.e. to a large extent, what Marx and Engels denounced of capitalist society, and which Michael Parenti, in his "Inventing Reality: the politics of mass media", will demonstrate still existed in 1986 precisely and above all in the USA; well, at the end of this impressive series of inversions of reality, the US politician makes some extremely indicative statements, in which, however, he immediately reveals the reality of that mystification, and the poor rhetorical skills of the author.

In fact, he says that "the seeds of totalitarian regimes", that is, of course, those that do not intend to allow the US ruling class to take advantage of the riches of those states (i.e. the Soviet Union) as if they were their own, "are nourished by misery and out of need" –precisely that condition in which Marx and Engels observe that the working class was thrown from bourgeois rule into capitalist society– and "spread into the evil terrain of poverty and conflict" –i.e. of open class struggle provoked by shameless and open emergence of exploitation, which juxtaposes immense riches and abysmal miseries– to then "reach their maximum growth when the hope of a people for a better life is dead",[46] i.e. the

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44. Harry S. Truman, *Address of the President to Congress, Recommending Assistance to Greece and Turkey,* (March 12, 1947): https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/address-president-congress-recommending-assistance-greece-and-turkey?documentid=NA&pagenumber=1

45. Ibid., 4.

46. Ibid., 5.

condition in which the oppressed “have no nothing to lose but their chains [and] they have a world to gain”[47].

Mr. Truman concludes: “We must keep that hope alive.”[48] But here certainly he can only be speaking of those states in which those “seeds” were germinating, and seemed to be more vigorous than ever, and that is, those countries which were still at that time *subject to the capitalist system of production*, certainly not to the socialist one, and the reckless US politician is therefore perfectly aware that that “evil soil” and nourishment were precisely the poisoned fruit that such system and the ruling class of the United States of America, and of the entire liberal West, had reserved for the working classes in the *imperial metropolises*.

In doing so, however, he unmasks in one fell swoop the crude hypocrisy of the inversion accomplished, because certainly only such a “way of life”, in which a few impose their will on the vast majority by force, terror, and oppression, physical and psychic, by preventing them from any kind of concrete “personal freedom”, so that they find themselves deprived of any property other than their own ability to work, can produce that “soil” and “nourishment”, and will unfailingly achieve such result.

Truman therefore, in that famous speech –which officially marked the beginning of the Cold War, and established the ideological presuppositions of the Marshall Plan and NATO, whose very existence must presuppose such an hegemonic image– is giving a *warning* to the ruling class, not only of the United States of America, but of the entire front of the colonialist states, i.e. the European ones, to which he addresses himself as the *representative* of the declared leading country of this coalition, and therefore the official, bureaucratic *spokesman* of that same ruling class, who proclaims the general strategy to follow for the block of the imperial metropolis: a warning that requires all these countries to immediately adapt to *bourgeois hegemony*, understood as the *liberal* one, and therefore a sudden change of course with respect to habits, customs, and culture spread in capitalist societies at the time.

6. Pulverization and rebirth of the revolutionary subject in the West

47. Marx, Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista,* 57.
48. Truman, *Address,* 5.

In the light of what has been said so far, therefore, the deepest essence of the movement of the historical process in the late 20th century should just have spontaneously revealed itself to the mind of the reader who has accomplished the understanding of the analysis presented here from the perspective of the dialectical development of events: as a relationship of interdependent elements which together constitute a structured process, whose characteristic dynamic proceeds by substitution of contrary factors, whose development in its simplest form (i.e. "normal", as in the case of an equation) determines its overcoming.

The effort made by the bourgeois ruling class in the West and by its lackey-servants, by the "comprador" bourgeoisie of the semi-colonial regimes of central and southern Europe, and by the system of cultural production, all of which have embraced that hegemony without reservation, at the same time ensuring *not to introduce* any radical "break" with the "traditional ideas", has been impressive, and it has involved social and productive forces of considerable magnitude, applied constantly and with an ever-growing diffusion for decades: it is essentially the issue of an immense *mass psychological operation* which, at least in Italy, can be demonstrated to have officially begun on August 18th, 1943, when Sicily fell into the hands of Anglo-American and British troops, and shortly thereafter the broadcasts of Radio Palermo, "sector of the Pwb, the 'Psychological Warfare Branch' [...] which makes propaganda and controls information on the Italian territory" already conquered by the "Allies", would begin, from whose microphones "Mikhail Kamenetzki, Misha for friends", a man who later "will be known by the name of Ugo Stille, one of the greatest Italian journalists"[49] operates with impeccable zeal.

The control exercised over the entire colonialist front by US cultural institutions (i.e. the overwhelming pressure of the bourgeois class's hegemony and of liberal ideology) was supposed to ensure the hagiographic narrative of liberalism an absolute advantage position in public education; on the means of information and mass entertainment; for academic authorities and for intellectuals, once the open military occupation of the invading troops (i.e. the uncovered appearance of the domination of the US ruling class), that the assumptions of that same narrative could admit only as a "state of exception", was suspended.

The intention not to carry out any real "break" with the "traditional ideas", then, is still a dialectical aspect of the question: on the one hand, in fact, it does not at

49. Vincenzo Vasile, *Salvatore Giuliano: bandito a stelle e strisce* (Milano: Baldini Castoldi Dalai editore, 2004), 42.

all imply the attempt of immediate elimination from each country of the competing ideology in the hegemonic field, and on the other hand it is that same cultural background in which “liberalism” took shape and which has provided it with its determining characteristics.

Those “ideas” in fact represent the dialectical result of the previous hegemony, and they are complementary to the present one, but they’re also a tool by which it is possible to represent the hegemony of the bourgeoisie as the “progressive” one, that is, *opposed* to the “conservative” one, presented as a “backward”, “discriminatory”, “authoritarian” legacy of feudal society, of which it is instead complementary: it is only matter of the dogmatic split of the appearance of that contradiction’s two complementary aspects, in which one of the two has taken the upper hand, and the survival of the other is functional only to provide a fictitious term of comparison of that “progress”, from the time when the “personal freedom” of which Truman speaks –which is what the liberal John Locke invoked to justify the institution of slavery– was stifled by “absolutism”.

It is therefore obvious that the bourgeois capitalist class in taking possession of cultural institutions, and beginning to establish its hegemony, has taken decisive steps to carry out a complete and thorough *revision* of the narrative of history and of liberal ideology, to be sure in particular about the United States of America, presented as an “indispensable nation” whose “manifest destiny” has placed at the helm of the “civilizing mission” of the West, today in the declination of the “export of democracy”, otherwise known as the “Aryan struggle for world domination”.

The very character of this narrative has not changed *at all* from before, and it assigns to the capitalist West, and by extension to white Anglo-Americans and white Europeans, exactly the same social and political position that was previously assigned to the feudal aristocracy and yet, on the basis of that inversion of meaning operated by the writers of Truman's speech, presented as the maximum expression of “negative freedom”, of “political democracy” and “human rights”, as the only alleged bulwark against “totalitarianism” and “absolutism”, and therefore held by the standard-bearers of the “independence” of peoples, which like the US people shrugged off their shoulders the British monarchy’s yoke.

This is once again a dialectical movement –which in the 1960s was obscurely guessed about by Guy Debord, who recognized the falsifying essence of public discourse in the West, though expressing it confusedly in the typical mystifying

language of metaphysical materialism– intended to hide the brutal reality of US history; the primary role of the US in the colonialist system, declassified to a trivial bauble; and the transformation of the system of international exploitation by the imperialist states from colonialism to *neocolonialism*, namely: from the practice of military occupation of the territories subjected to the authority of the metropolis and of their direct political subjection to the head of state of the invading country, to that of the formal independence of all those states, whose political *personalities* are so selected and formed as to respond in a clear and consistent way to the will and interests of the imperial master, and whose political *authorities* are structured in such a way as to fully favor those same wills and interests and to be able to easily undergo effective economic, financial, or social coercion, should they prove recalcitrant to grant the best possible investment conditions to Western corporations, so that the latter extract all the possible surplus value from the country, without making it go bankrupt, since in this case they would risk losing their investment: everything is then presented with an admirable show of hypocrisy as a promotion of "freedom", of "democracy", of "rights", without ever specifying that it is a question of freedom, democracy, and rights, yes, *but only* those that belong to the "people of the lords".

What changes here, with respect to feudal hegemony, is the hope Mr. Truman speaks of, "hope" of a "better life", *represented by the conditions of existence in the imperial metropolis*, then sold to all neocolonial and western peoples as "American dream": and that is the underlying idea that in *earthly existence* it is possible to elevate one's social condition, which, in capitalist society, exclusively means *passing from the working class to that of the exploiters.*

The ideal sold by the capitalist hegemony is that of earning *more than necessary* by working *less* than necessary, and indeed, ideally, *by not working at all,* and therefore to obtain a living from the fruits of the work of others, making all this appear as a profit resulting from the "initiative" of a "free individual", while any constraint about it must be denounced as illiberal, authoritarian, undemocratic.

Our dialectical materialist analysis has shown how this inversion –which for the French writer would depend on indefinite impersonal forces that assume apparent wills in autonomous social dynamics– is a *perfectly logical consequence* of a vast range of material factors, given as current and proven in the historical process's condition, the interaction of which has determined such peculiar development of events, and not another, in a modality that can only be

defined as *dialectical*, that is according to the alternation of apparent phases of the distribution of these factors whose relationships define each of those stages as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

Considering then this same dynamic according to the criterion we followed in this paper, dialectically, it becomes clear how the reciprocal relationships of the factors we considered have unleashed a process of *pulverization* of the revolutionary subject in the West, causing the situation described in the first section.

In fact, in the balanced evaluation of the events witnessed in the course of historical events, it is completely clear that the words written in the *Manifesto* played a decisive role in this process too, and the influence they have had goes far beyond that exerted on those who were inspired by it, as an example of political practice to promote the "communist revolution", also extending to those who instead intended to avoid this revolution at all costs.

The transformations that took place in the capitalist West in the decades following the declarations of March 12th, 1947, on the other hand, speak very clearly, and highlight a precise convergence of the evidence at our disposal, so that the material conditions of the power relations in society at the end of the Second World War would have required the bourgeois ruling class to adopt a strategy taking into account the more or less rooted *and growing* presence of its hegemonic competitor, as noted at the beginning of this section, and therefore to use this situation to its advantage.

Thus, whereas in fact, in the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels exclude that the communists can adopt any other means except the "violent overthrow" of the established order, here in the West on the one hand during the 1960s the ideology of "non-violence" emerges –and the mainstream means of information and entertainment create its icons and promote them as figures to be taken as a model, invoked by the "left"– as the main road of social demands, and on the other side instead, the special operations of NATO secret services succeed in infiltrating the political formations of the socialist area to feed, and promote, terrorism under the banner of the revolutionary "left", which shrewdly refers to the words of the *Manifesto*, and to that explicit declaration of intent, in this way justifying their elimination, often violent, without meeting mass opposition.

Whereas in the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels declare that the communists intend to abolish the "private property" of the bourgeois because "it exists precisely

because for the nine-tenths it does not exist", a "property whose necessary condition is the lack of property for the vast majority of society"[50], then in Western countries an ever greater percentage of workers, by means of the benefits resulting from the creation of labor aristocracy, can afford a small "private property", and the capitalist system of production, thanks to neocolonial exploitation, can create an economy of scale, material and cultural, which provides both an *abundance* of goods, however shoddy, and *liberality* of customs; modeled on the need to consume the goods produced by the capitalists, and on the imitation of the lifestyle of the *real* owners' class, those who own the means of production (i.e. the ruling class) who are horrified by the idea "of the alleged official community of women in communism", and yet "not to mention official prostitution, find one of their principal delights in seducing each other's wives"[51].

Again: whereas in the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels denounce the "petty, hateful, exasperating […] despotism" existing within the "large factory of the industrial capitalist" in which the workers, in addition to being "servants of the bourgeois class, of the bourgeois state", are "enslaved also by the machine"[52], losing any "personal dignity in the exchange value" and therefore any real, concrete "negative freedom"; thus the civil rights movements overwhelmingly emerge as a tension "to universalize and make negative freedom itself concrete"[53] just as "the workers' struggle invoked by the Manifesto" was supposed to do.

And yet, according to the "Truman doctrine", only as *hope*, i.e. as a future perspective, the satisfaction of which will have to resolve any social tension, whereby the ruling class makes tactical concessions in this direction for strategic reasons, and to consolidate its hegemony without putting at risk its own dominion, preventing such movements, even by exercising the latter, from deviating by the direction in which, once they have arisen and been trained, they have been channeled.

Such hope, as noted above, is not, as in the "absolutist" society of the past, projected into an unattainable time except after death, but into earthly existence, in which "happiness", i.e. "negative freedom", is guaranteed for everybody, which however, in the present, due to a *political* party, or a country, which does

50. Marx, Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista,* 29.
51. Ibid., 32.
52. Ibid., 15-16.
53. Losurdo, *Introduzione,* xix.

not respect the principles of “democracy” and “freedom”, can never be achieved (i.e. it does not diverge in anything from the “Second Coming” of “Christ”).

Thus, the so-called “mainstream” press is always willing to present itself as “progressive”, and that means to a large extent “liberal”, for “rights”, in favor of “minorities”, of “science”, of the “theory of evolution”, and a newspaper like “The Washington Post”, which to define as wildly reactionary is not inaccurate, can title, on p. F6 of the May 11th, 2023 edition: “The Right's new culture-war target: 'Woke-AI'”. In fact, the mainstream press is *the voice of the hegemonic master,* and the latter is the capitalist, bourgeois class, whose ideology, however reactionary, continues to oppose that presented as feudal, aristocratic, associated with “creation”, “superstition”, and “faith”.

Finally, whereas in the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels declare that “a part of the bourgeoisie, in particular a part of the bourgeois ideologues, is now passing over to the proletariat”[54], then the conditions are set for a part of the proletariat to pass over to the side of the bourgeoisie, i.e. the working aristocracy of which Lenin acutely saw the perniciousness, and a part of the ideologues, or rather, of the intellectuals of the socialist area in the West, is absorbed into the superstructures of the hegemonic power and produces the *revisionist* reading of the history and of the reality of socialism and socialist states, allowing the rooting of the aforementioned “Western Marxism”.

Intellectuals whose names are well known –from Hannah Arendt to Michel Foucault, from Toni Negri to Theodore Adorno, from Perry Anderson to Max Horkheimer– although the palm of the greatest exponent of this movement, exemplary representative of the function of these individuals, undoubtedly must be acknowledged to Herbert Marcuse: hired by the Office for Strategic Services during the Second World War, with the task of drafting reports on the political and social situation in Germany,[55] remained a part of it until its dissolution in 1947, and then joined the CIA, in which, from the United States, he was head of the Office for Central European Affairs. He retired from this post in 1951, to then become a teacher in the main universities of the United States, rise to the status intellectual and writer of international renown, and establish himself as a pivotal figure in the “left” circles of the 60s and 70s, founding and animating the so-called “Frankfurt School”.

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54. Marx, Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista,* 19.

55. Franz Neumann, Herbert Marcuse, et al. *Secret reports on Nazi Germany: the Frankfurt School contribution to the war effort* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

The latter, together with that whole movement, played a fundamental role in the eclipse of *the colonial and national question* from the horizon of the political and social debate in the West, thus allowing itself to express unjustified, completely *arbitrary* condemnations of all the socialist revolutions and the states founded by it, going so far as to reach the absurd and outrageous comparison between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.

Western Marxism is an obvious consequence of the "Truman doctrine", since in order to build a cohesive and stable sector of labor aristocracy it is necessary to gloss over the colonial question. Such sector can exist –as an exponent of the "we" among whom according to "liberals" there must be no slavery– only if the ruling class manages, through the exploitation of the neocolonial countries, to obtain sufficient surplus profits (i.e. surplus-surplus value), to maintain or increase its own income while conceding to the working classes in the imperial metropolises the benefits of that privileged condition, that is by making the working class participate in the proceeds of their business activities in the periphery, and thus making it accomplice in the looting and their crimes. In this way the working class senselessly, albeit in an ever more unconscious way, links its destinies to those of the bourgeoisie, which however will not hesitate even for a moment to abandon it to abject misery (i.e. the "third-worldization" of that country, in the words of prof. Parenti) if the conditions cease to be favorable to its profit.

Nonetheless, the more bourgeois hegemony consolidates, the more the entire population is led to see the world through the eyes of the capitalist, and to be falsely convinced that the only means of improving one's condition is, as observed first, *to become a capitalist*, i.e. an "entrepreneur": this is in fact the most obsequiously revered social figure in bourgeois capitalist society, to whom, when he is "successful", everything, or almost everything, is allowed, depending on the mass of capital which he is able to control.

There is no alternative to bourgeois society in bourgeois hegemony –it is presented as a fact of nature from which one cannot deviate without suffering ruin and destruction– and the whole society is composed of single isolated individuals who are all potential "entrepreneurs", that is, would-be exploiters of the work of others.

The operation carried out by the capitalist ruling classes in the West had a fundamental executor in "Western Marxism", which fulfilled the task of providing support to that inversion of meaning *from within* the political field of

the “left”, aggregating Western communist and socialist parties in the context of liberal “representative democracy”, by offering arguments, however specious, to such parties to break away from the political lines of socialist countries –be it the Soviet Union, from 1956 onwards, or later of the People's Republic of China, or the Republic of Cuba– and justifying this detachment on the basis of the *Manifesto* itself: that is, on the very intention to renounce *Marxism-Leninism*, and therefore with it anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism too, in this way placing the basis for a mass transition of the socialist-leaning working classes under the grip of bourgeois hegemony, into the camp of “progressives”.

The point that “Western Marxism” has in fact exploited –which is the same point to which the insane ideas of Lev Davidovich Bronstein, known as “Trotsky” appealed– to denounce the socialist states as non-Marxist and authoritarian, traitors to the true thought of the “master”, is the formulation, which Marx and Engels give at the end of the second part of the Manifesto, of the process by which “when the proletariat [...] becomes the dominant class”, it follows that “it forcibly suppresses the old relations of production”, and with them “also […] classes in general, and therefore its own class domination”, whereby “in place of the old bourgeois society […] takes over an association in which the free development of each [i.e. “negative freedom”] is the condition for the free development of all”[56].

This passage has been interpreted by Western Marxism in a wholly *tendentious* way, as if it wanted to imply that, once the “revolution” has been accomplished and the position of “dominant class” has been conquered, *at the same time* this must lead, without a perceptible latency, to the dissolution of class society and to the same class domination of the proletarians, and therefore to a stateless society, since “political power [...] is the organized power of one class to oppress the other”[57]: in this way allowing the slandering of socialist states as “totalitarian”, “authoritarian”, even “imperialist”, *by the mere fact of being such*, “States”, i.e. political organizations, completely overlooking the material conditions in which those organizations had been formed, and couldn’t but be formed by the Communists, in the development of the contradiction between (neo)colonialism and anti-colonialism, embodied above all by the great October Revolution.

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56. Marx, Engels, *Manifesto del Partito Comunista,* 37.
57. Ibid.

But *nowhere* in fact Marx and Engels affirm anything of the kind, since, at the beginning of that same paragraph, they write that it is "in the course of evolution" that "class differences will have disappeared", since "the rise of the proletariat to dominant class", as they explicitly clarified just two pages earlier, is only "the first step" of the "communist revolution"[58]. During the latter the path for the construction of socialism can only be long and tortuous, on the one hand due to the opposition and aggression of the imperialist and colonialist powers, and on the other hand due to the need for reform and modernization of the country, and the education of the population according to the hegemony of the proletarian class –although it is nevertheless necessary for communists today to recognize the philosophical and logical limits, which we have highlighted in this writing, of this formulation and of the *Manifesto* in general, in careful consideration of the concrete situation of its drafting, at the time of which the two authors were not yet in their thirties, although it is surprising that they did not dwell on reviewing it when repeatedly republished, limits which precisely allowed that text to be exploited.

The extension and rooting of bourgeois hegemony in Western societies thus resulted in the complete destruction of the revolutionary subject in these countries, its reduction to a social dust, which comes alive in the volatile tendencies raised on purpose by the media, in which the mass of individuals divides itself between *flatterers* of the established order –whose maximum aspiration is to become part of the sector that he perceives as privileged in society, i.e. the richest, most wealthy classes, and thus aspires to become "rich"– and *denigrators* of this order –namely the anarchists, whose maximum aspiration is the extinction of the State and of *their own* "work", but towards whom they will never do anything, since they will never soil themselves with the "power" of the State, their bitterest enemy.

All of this found indeed important contributions in the description that Marx and Engels make of "work" in the factory, portrayed as "repugnant"[59], and of the conditions of "brutalization" to which it reduces the "proletarian", which has been exploited to produce a *reactionary* idea on the figure of the worker, as a "noble savage", a man of "good will", but unable, due to the exploitation imposed upon him, to obtain by himself the means of his own emancipation, both intellectual and material. Could he in that case obtain positive results when he is entrusted with the management, not only of his own existence, but, as a class, of the whole of society?

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58. Ibid., 35 and 37.
59. Ibid., 15.

On the other hand, the notion, “by himself”, is essentially *inaccurate*: any means or instrument, fruit of the intellectual elaboration of the empirical material by the human mind, results as a product, which is, by definition, a combination of distinct organic components, one constant, and the other variable, where the first is the knowledge and assets accumulated and handed down from previous generations, which, of course, far exceeds what any individual, or class, can produce “by itself”, in the performance of one's living labour, both in the production of knowledge, relative or absolute, and in that of the means of subsistence.

Once again, dialectically, therefore the “State” is also the most bitter declared enemy of the presumed antagonists of the ”anarchists”, i.e. of the “liberals” and of the “capitalists”, who however are well aware of the importance of its function for supporting its own dominion and hegemony. However, since the latter do not intend to leave that “power” in the hands of anyone else, but those others after all do not want to hold it *at all*, it cannot come as a surprise that the two coexist harmoniously, and anarchism reveals itself for what it is: the perfect counterpoint to the narrative of liberal hegemony, used to neutralize leftist social forces, dismember solidarity and class consciousness of workers, by raking them into masses of do-nothing idealists, as to make them harmless “rebels” who can be put to bed with small “libertarian” concessions, in the sphere of social customs and identity politics, with this making sure to erase even the mere *conceivability* of questioning the established order, without having to resort to explicit censorship measures.

It is therefore perfectly evident that the main social scourge that must be fought today, in order to promote a rebirth of the revolutionary subject in the West, is *political indifferentism*, of which Marx himself made a penetrating analysis.

This attitude is a perfectly obvious result of the hegemony of liberal thought, bourgeois ideology, and essentially reduces itself to *conformism*: it is precisely the ideology of the small owner, or of the libertarian anarchist –perhaps dedicated to the cultivation of some esoteric orientalist conception– who, as long as he is not disturbed in the privacy of his own (zen) garden in his own (“eco-friendly”) home, where he can indeed feel himself “the master”, finds nothing to object to the fact that in the meantime his neighbor (i.e. the populations of neocolonial countries) is robbed of any of their property, and indeed, probably he’s not even aware of such theft.

7. The superiority of the dialectical method is the advantage of communists

In conclusion, the basic problem that Marxism-Leninism, at least in the West, has to face is that of clarifying in detail and significantly popularizing by all available means the reasons why capital has found the resources to fight the tendency of the crisis and the dialectical development of its overcoming, not only from the strictly technical point of view of the economy's workings, but also from that of the effectiveness and persistence of liberal ideology in its diffusion and rooting in the working classes (i.e. who do not participate in the ownership of the means of production).

The exponential growth of capitalist economies, their financialization, has made possible the logarithmic extension of the credit leverage, creating a persistent and constant inflationary dynamic, called "growth", in which the mass magnitude of production has simultaneously counterbalanced the falling trend of the rate of profit, and the loss of currencies' purchasing power, all obtained thanks to the neocolonial exploitation by the United States of America of the territories subject to partition by the European colonialist powers until 1945, with the help of those same countries which were allowed, on condition that they would inextricably link themselves to the economic destinies of the imperial master, to become part of the semi-colonial cohort within the perimeter of the metropolis.

These resources are first of all those of *knowledge*, the *cultural* ones, in all their distinct declinations and aspects: and that is, on the one hand, the application of machines in the search for an ever greater labor productivity –an operator of a modern industrial machinery in fact, can, with adequate technical training, be instructed to perform such-and-such a relatively simple overseeing procedure that supervises the machine *in the simultaneous execution of much more than one procedure*, which he or she alone would never be able to carry out, even if he had the knowledge to do it– on the other hand, the complete realization of a *totalitarian social hegemony*, based on the widespread and incessant diffusion of a very precise vision-of-the-world, meant to include in its own ideological framework the whole field of human knowledge as demonstrative corollaries of the indisputable, natural, and ahistorical character of the social and economic relationships on which those same superstructures are based.

In turn, this hegemony finds its roots in the *segregation* of that same knowledge, i.e. in its exclusive administration by superstructural institutions

whose management is entrusted to individuals belonging to the ruling class, and who share in all respects its vision-of-the-world: it is precisely on this principle, moreover –that of the *segregation of knowledge*– the one on which the affirmation of private property, and the development of the social superstructures consequent to it, is based, during the historical process in its complex.

But it is obvious then: in the first place, the weapons supplied by the process of development of industry and the accumulation of capital, which the working class must turn dialectically against the capitalists themselves are precisely these latter, and this means not simply to "elevate […] to *dominant* class"[60], but to establish the conditions for which it has the means that allow it to reach the dimension of a *ruling* class, as a necessary condition of the "first step in the workers' revolution", i.e. communist.

This means that the working class must be able to establish its own hegemony, and therefore have at its disposal, at hand, a vision-of-the-world *superior* in all respects to that offered by bourgeois liberal, i.e. dogmatic and idealist, thought: a vision-of-the-world therefore founded directly and unequivocally on the essential principles of *dialectical materialism*, to the concept of which it is necessary to lead back in a consequent way the entire field of phenomena, summarizing in an organic, integral, complete, logical, and empirical synthesis, i.e. scientific, the value of knowledge handed down from previous generations, and refining it in a new form determined by a superior genre that makes it a coherent whole from whose analysis *no remainder* is left over.

The fulcrum and superiority of the dialectical method over the dogmatic one lies in considering one's object from multiple points of view simultaneously.

The very idea of such an understanding can be difficult even to imagine in its concrete realization, yet it is simply the observation in the mind (i.e. the act of contemplating) of a notion, a concept, whose constituent elements make up an *organic* unity endowed with a transcendental value that results from the factors of the composition of that knowledge, as productive combination of the interaction between the factors distinguishable by the mind in the concrete situation of material existence and whatever phenomenon's measure of understanding as a primary function of the mind itself (i.e. the intellect).

Obtaining this understanding means possessing in the mind a transcendental object –a concept– which as a whole offers to that mind which possesses it a

60. Ibid., 35, emphasis mine.

complete representation of a phenomenon in general, that is, of any phenomenon: this concept is the one expounded by Lenin, the unity in the conjunction of the two opposites, which however are *not in the strict sense opposites*, but must be considered as *complementary*, that is, yes *contraries*, but not exclusive of each other (otherwise their synthesis could not exist).

This object in the mind, this knowledge, is the understanding of a *procedure* in its entirety, which can therefore be contemplated in its unfolding, when one pauses to reflect on it, whatever its phenomenal content: for this reason ριστοτέλης believed, erroneously, that in the "receiving" of "knowledge" starting from the "senses", the intellect grasps the "form", the "quality" itself *which was "actual" as "soul" to a certain "living being",* in its own "transcendental way-of-being" and therefore admitted the "intellectual intuition" which instead Immanuel Kant demonstrated not to be possible.

The crucial question to keep in mind is the following: it is necessary to acquire an understanding of dialectical dynamics as a formal representation of the development of any phenomenon, whose phenomenal appearance corresponds to a motion whose trend develops according to the figure of the *double spiral*. To acquire this understanding it is in turn necessary to adopt the dialectical materialist perspective of that dynamic, and that is to be able to observe with the mind this dynamic in the form of a wave that develops in *three dimensions.*

It is therefore necessary to obtain the general representation of that figure whose characters define the dialectical dynamics in its entirety, thus enucleating three magnitudes: (1) the angular momentum calculated with respect to the semi-symmetrical center of the translation; (2) the differential value between the angular moments of the two apparently opposite tendencies, which actually proceed along the same *axis of development*; (3) the axial moment of the harmonic development of the two tendencies calculated with respect to the zero point (i.e., $y = 0$) of that process, i.e. the minimum phenomenal magnitude of that material contradiction, and therefore the measure of the movement made from the origin of that certain dialectical dynamics (i.e. "time", but if you reflect carefully, you will discover that "time" does not exist as a "substance", and it is nothing other than the notion of the measure of movement, namely, that of the Earth on its own axis).

It is perfectly clear how this structural representation fully expresses the concept of dialectical materialism, to the extent that it can offer the mind with a clear perception of the concrete trend of the dynamics of phenomena,

representing the figure of the opposition between thesis and antithesis (i.e. the two angular moments in the vector with respect to the center) which produces a synthesis (i.e. the progress of the axial moment) whereby the movement *returns* to the previous geometric coordinates, but at a *higher* level, in which a new thesis and a new antithesis appear: these sum up the previous values in themselves and go beyond those by expressing a more complete form of the potential contained in that contradiction.

Dogmatic thought, on the other hand, is not able to understand the real dynamics of phenomena in the magnitude of the three dimensions, and is always limited to a *two-dimensional* understanding of this development, imprisoned by the separation between its two opposing aspects, which it carries out by its own constitution (i.e. for it the relation "$+x \neq -x$" is valid, the two cannot coincide in any case), and therefore it can only comprehend that structure either as a series of concentric circles, which it represents as a conical pyramid (i.e. to which it refers the social superstructure's organization), or as a sinusoidal wave, which represents variations in magnitude of one or the other factor in the course of a rectilinear movement (i.e. to which it refers the development of history and events).

The intrinsic superiority of dialectical thought therefore cannot but *necessarily* lead to the triumph of the practice of socialism and of the ideology founded on Marxism-Leninism, but only to the extent that it frees itself from the dogmatic chains that imprison its potential, and constitutes itself as an autonomous vision-of-the-world proposing itself in a consequent and credible way as the only true *demonstrative science* of economy, politics, and society, as well as of life and the entire Universe.

6

From Fields to Forums: A Reflective Commentary on Agricultural Resistance Amidst Neo-Liberal Policies in Jammu and Kashmir

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Introduction

Apple orchards are integral to the socio-economic fabric of Kashmir, serving as a crucial source of economy and sustenance for the region.[2] Situated in the scenic Himalayan landscapes, these orchards significantly enhance the agricultural productivity of the region and embody the cultural heritage of Kashmir.[3] The production of apples is vital, contributing to the livelihoods of approximately five million people, or nine hundred thousand families throughout India, with Kashmir alone accounting for seventy-seven percent of the nation's total apple output, equating to more than 2.4 million metric tons.[4] This sector not only supports the economic and social welfare of millions but also contributes eight percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Jammu and Kashmir.[5]

Despite its significance, the apple industry faces challenges, including issues with pest control, fertilizer quality, and corporate exploitation.[6] In response, the Apple Farmers Federation of India, and the Jammu and Kashmir Kisan Tehreek convened the first National Conference in Shopian district (Kashmir), from July 15th to 16th, 2023, aimed at addressing the complex challenges confronting apple orchard farmers and elucidating the negative impacts of existing government policies. This paper focuses on the critical concerns discussed during the inaugural National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, an event that marked a significant platform for both experts and the general

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2. See, Entomophily of Apple Ecosystem in Kashmir Valley, India: A Review." *International Journal of Scientific Research in Biological Sciences* 5(5) (2018); Shah, Z. A., Dar, M. A., Dar, E. A., Obianefo, C. A., Bhat, A. H., Ali, M. T., ... & Sayed, S. "Sustainable Fruit Growing: An Analysis of Differences in Apple Productivity in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir." *Sustainability* 14(21) (2022): 14544; Riyaz, Muzafar, Pratheesh Mathew, Gabriel Paulraja, and Savarimuthu Ignacimuthu. Bhat, A., Malik, H. A., Sultan, A., Kachroo, M. M., Qadir, A., Qureshi, I., ... & Qureshi, A. "Factors Hindering Plantation of Improved Apple Varieties in Kashmir Valley: An Economic Analysis." *Journal of Applied Horticulture* 24(2) (2022): 224-228; Mushtaq, U., & Goswami, K. "Understanding the Patterns of Agrarian Transformation: State-Mediated Commercialisation and Deagrarianisation in Kashmir." *Development in Practice* (2023): 1-19.

3. Cooks, L., & Gazia, I. "Food Translation Under Occupation: Apples, Identity, and Resistance in Indian-Occupied Kashmir." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 17(3) (2024): 229-248.

4. Villat, N. J., Dey, S., & Lamba, N., eds. *Apple Is Our Livelihood.* P Sundarayya Memorial Trust, 2022; Bhat, W. A. "Unravelling the Interplay Between Agriculture, Livelihood, and Identity." *Economic and Political Weekly* 58(30) (2023): 29 Jul.

5. Ibid.

6. Shah, Z. A., Dar, M. A., Dar, E. A., Obianefo, C. A., Bhat, A. H., Ali, M. T., e. al. "Sustainable Fruit Growing: An Analysis of Differences in Apple Productivity in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir." *Sustainability* 14(21) (2022): 14544.

populace to voice their challenges. The conference, organized by groups aligned with leftist ideologies,[7] aimed to spotlight the struggles faced by the common masses, particularly in the agricultural sector. Drawing from the firsthand experiences of the author, who attended as a delegate, this study provides an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic hurdles confronting apple farmers in the region, underscored by the complex interplay of neo-liberal policies and corporate practices. It further examines the collective call for action and the strategies proposed to counteract these challenges, emphasizing the need for policy reforms and the empowerment of local farming communities to ensure sustainable development and equitable growth. Through this paper, the author seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on agricultural sustainability and social justice, reflecting on the conference's role as a catalyst for change and advocacy in Jammu and Kashmir's apple farming landscape.

Corporate Exploitation in Agriculture

In the opening session of the conference, Ashok Dhawale,[8] President of the All-India Kisan Sabha, highlighted the significant challenges faced by farmers in the apple sector of Kashmir, including prohibitive input costs and difficulties in obtaining fair prices for their produce. Dhawale also recounted a distressing incident from the 2022 apple season where governmental actions led to considerable losses for farmers, and he touched upon the severe issue of farmer suicides within the region.[9] These insights underscore the critical challenges within India's apple economy, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, prompting an examination of the efforts by organizations like the Apple Federation of India and Jammu and Kashmir Kisan Tehreek to address these issues.

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7. To know more about the Left in Kashmir (India) see, Bhat, W. A. “Impact of Communist Ideology on the Politics of Kashmir.” *Social Scientist* 50(7/8) (2022): 27-40; Bhat, W. A. “Re-Examining the Rise of Left in India.” *Critique* 51(1) (2023): 131-139; Bhat, W. A. “Leftist Dynamics in Post-370 Kulgam of Kashmir: Contours of Change.” *South Asia Research* 44(3) (2024): 295-313.

8. Ashok Dhawale, President of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), is a distinguished figure in India's agrarian movement, advocating for farmers' rights and reforms. Leading AIKS, affiliated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Dhawale has been at the forefront of significant protests addressing issues like land rights, debt relief, and fair agricultural pricing. His efforts include organizing the notable 2018 Maharashtra farmers' Long March, highlighting agrarian distress nationally. Dhawale's activism merges academic insight with grassroots mobilization, making substantial contributions to discourse on equitable agricultural policies and rural development.

9. Author’s observation as a delegate at the conference, 2023.

In the wake Comrade Dhawale's enlightening presentation, P. Krishna Prasad[10] offered a comprehensive analysis of the adversities confronting the agricultural sector in Kashmir, enriched by historical and contemporary perspectives. Drawing from the establishment of the Kisan Sabha[11] during the British colonial era, Prasad underscored pivotal movements in Telangana, West Bengal, and Kashmir that have shaped the agrarian landscape, attributing significant socio-economic advancements in Kashmir to its unique governance structure as a quasi-independent entity.[12] He addressed the disparities in land distribution across India, highlighting the exploitation of smallholder farmers due to escalating costs and indebtedness, exacerbated by capitalist market dynamics.[13]

Prasad discussed the pricing disparity for apples between local markets in Kashmir and major urban centres like Delhi and Mumbai, which results in significant corporate profits at the farmers' expense, a situation extending to crops such as rubber, apricot, almond, rice, and tomatoes, thus exacerbating the plight of farmers nationwide.[14] He also identified the fragmentation within the farming community, rooted in caste and religious divisions, as a vulnerability to neoliberal exploitation,[15] advocating for unity among farmers and suggesting the formation of crop-specific federations to strengthen their bargaining power. The conference highlighted the issue of suboptimal apple production per hectare in Kashmir compared to global benchmarks, with India's productivity notably lower than that of Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands.[16] Prasad's recommendations included reducing production costs, establishing a pension scheme for farmers, and the necessity for governmental action to establish cold storage facilities and counter corporate exploitation. Prasad's advocacy culminated in a call to action for establishing local farmers' associations, inspired by historical land rights struggles in Kashmir, aiming to focus on the

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10. P. Krishna Prasad is a key figure in India's agrarian reform movements, serving as a leader within the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS). His work primarily focuses on advocating for the rights of farmers, challenging neoliberal agricultural policies, and promoting sustainable farming practices. Prasad's efforts have been instrumental in organizing significant farmer protests and campaigns for policy changes to support agrarian communities across India.

11. Yardumian, R. “Record of the Kisan Sabha.” *Far Eastern Survey* 14(11) (1945): 141-144.

12. Author’s observation as a delegate at the conference, 2023.

13. Ibid.

14. Behera, U. K., & France, J. “Integrated Farming Systems and the Livelihood Security of Small and Marginal Farmers in India and Other Developing Countries.” *Advances in Agronomy* 138 (2016): 235-282.

15. Walker, K. L. M. “Neoliberalism on the Ground in Rural India: Predatory Growth, Agrarian Crisis, Internal Colonization, and the Intensification of Class Struggle.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 35(4) (2008): 557-620.

16. Shah, “Sustainable Fruit Growing,” 14544.

rights and welfare of apple growers and advocate for systemic changes to ensure sustainable and equitable agricultural practices.[17]

Challenges in Agricultural Policy

The state of agriculture in Jammu and Kashmir, as detailed by Zahoor Ahmad Rather, an influential left-wing activist within the Kashmiri agricultural community, was thoroughly examined in a comprehensive report. This report, presented at the conference, shed light on the significant challenges faced by apple producers in the region. Rather's insights, based on observations made during the conference, highlighted the array of adversities currently impacting the apple farming sector, offering a critical perspective on the issues at hand.[18] He detailed the sector's resilience amid challenges post-revocation of Article 370,[19] significantly affecting apple production dynamics. The disruption of transportation facilities during the harvest season, a critical period marked by national highway blockages, was highlighted as a significant impediment, contrasting with its operational status throughout the rest of the year. Rather suggested these obstacles could be the result of neoliberal corporate strategies manipulating market conditions to their advantage.[20]

Furthermore, he critiqued the unconventional selling practices of apples in Kashmir, where transactions are made per pack (nug) rather than by weight, causing confusion and potentially disadvantaging farmers in pricing. To address these challenges, Rather proposed the implementation of Minimum Support Prices and crop insurance specific to the apple sector. He also voiced his opposition to the Goods and Services Tax (GST), humorously labelling it the 'Gabbar Singh Tax,' for imposing an undue financial burden on all commodities, disregarding the common populace's financial capacity. His recommendations for mitigating these issues included regulating transportation charges, standardizing apple box sizes, and curbing corporate exploitation. The slogan 'Saib Ko Bachao, Kashmir ko Bachao' (Save Apple, Save Kashmir) was presented as a rallying cry for urgent intervention."[21]

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17. Author's observation as a delegate at the conference, 2023.
18. Ibid.
19. Hussain, Z. "Implications of Article 370 Abrogation for Intergroup Relations Between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir Valley." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* (2023); Kazi, S. "Women, Gender Politics, and Resistance in Kashmir." *Socio-Legal Review* 18 (2022): 95.
20. Author's observation as a delegate at the conference, 2023.
21. Ibid.

Multiple Perspectives

In an impassioned discourse witnessed at the conference, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami[22] critically analysed the impact of the current political and economic landscape on the agricultural sector, with a specific focus on the challenges faced by apple farmers and marginalized labourers. He articulated concerns over the government's neglect of the agricultural community, a neglect that has marginalized small-scale farmers and exacerbated their challenges, pointing to a significant failure in governmental protection of its most vulnerable citizens.[23] Furthermore, Tarigami addressed the detrimental influence of corporate interests on agriculture, highlighting the severe disparities in pricing as evidence of corporate greed, which has resulted in the undervaluation of farmers' labour.[24] He also brought attention to an alarming incident in Shopian, where labourers from Bihar were attacked, as reported by the ”Indian Express” in 2023,[25] illustrating the increasing tensions and the government's failure to safeguard marginalized communities.

Amid these challenges, Tarigami advocated for collective action and principled advocacy to uphold the rights and interests of the farming community, underscoring the importance of government intervention to address farmers' grievances and enhance their welfare. His speech called for a comprehensive strategy that places the stability of the agricultural sector and the well-being of its workers above corporate profits, highlighting the critical need for a shift in policy focus.[26]

Delegates from diverse regions significantly contributed to the discourse at the conference, addressing a broad spectrum of agricultural issues relevant to their localities. Discussions encompassed the promotion of organic farming

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22. Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami is a prominent political figure from Jammu and Kashmir, India, known for his longstanding involvement in regional politics. As a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Tarigami has been vocal about social justice, workers' rights, and the need for peace and democratic processes in the region. He has represented the Kulgam constituency in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly for multiple terms, advocating for the rights and welfare of the marginalized sections of society. Tarigami's political career is marked by his efforts to bridge communal divides and his opposition to policies detrimental to the socio-economic fabric of Jammu and Kashmir. The author has conducted many interviews with Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, during his Ph. D programme.

23. Author’s observation as a delegate at the conference, 2023.

24. Ibid.

25. “Jammu and Kashmir: Migrant Workers Shot in Shopian.” *Indian Express*, July 14, 2023. Retrieved from https://indianexpress.com/article/india/jammu-and-kashmir-migrant-workers-shot-shopian-8834638/.

26. Author’s observation as a delegate at the conference, 2023.

practices, the need for increased production of high-quality apples, strategies for reducing production costs, the importance of price regulation, and the advocacy for the elimination of substandard pesticides, insecticides, and fertilizers. A notable proposal was the establishment of an independent agricultural institute aimed at standardizing agricultural products to ensure their quality and safety.[27]

Somlal Ji, the Secretary of Kisan Tehreek from Jammu, in a compelling speech, praised the conference for its role in converging the voices of the agricultural sector to deliberate on pressing issues. He highlighted the importance of such platforms in cultivating collective dialogue and action towards addressing agricultural challenges. Emphasizing the critical role of government intervention, Somlal Ji argued that significant advancements could only be achieved through unified efforts.[28]

Subsequently, Om Prakash, President of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), voiced robust support for the Apple Federations and other groups advocating on behalf of marginalized farmers. He underscored the necessity of farmers vocalizing their grievances, asserting that their active participation is crucial for the recognition and resolution of their challenges. Om Prakash's statements further solidified the conference's theme of solidarity and the essential need for platforms that elevate the voices of the agricultural community, especially those facing marginalization.[29]

These delegate contributions highlighted a unified call for agricultural reforms, emphasizing organic farming, quality control, cost management, and regulatory measures, indicating a holistic approach to overcoming the sector's systemic challenges. Furthermore, the push for establishing an independent agricultural institute marks a stride towards institutionalizing standards that could enhance the quality and sustainability of India's agricultural output.

Democratic Rights and Agricultural Advocacy

Ghulam Mohi-u-din, a distinguished member of the CPI M and the District Development Council, presented a critical resolution at the assembly,

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.

emphasizing the vital need to uphold democratic values. He highlighted the detrimental impact of the suppression of fundamental rights, specifically pointing to the revocation of articles 370 and 35A and argued that this legislative change has profoundly affected the lives of residents in Kashmir. The loss of honour and dignity, compounded by the ongoing military presence and distressing events spanning decades, was attributed to the current government's policies, underscoring an urgent need for the restoration of democratic rights in the region. Mohi-u-din elaborated on the significant negative consequences for numerous families facing restrictions and denials by authorities, which have aggravated the challenges of rising inflation and unemployment. His advocacy for reinstating democratic rights in Kashmir served as a rallying cry, urging action to counteract governmental neglect and the erosion of democratic foundations.[30]

Rallying for the Apple Sector

The conference reached its zenith on July 16th in Shirmal Shopian, culminating in a rally that attracted a substantial audience and featured speeches from notable industry experts, including Ghulam Nabi Malik, Krishna Prasad, Ashok Dhawale, and particularly Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami. As a senior leader of CPI M and PAGD Convenor, Tarigami elucidated the pivotal role of apple cultivation in sustaining the livelihoods of countless farmers, highlighting the deep connection between the agricultural community and the apple economy. He critiqued the unequal distribution of resources like cold storage facilities and criticized governmental inertia concerning the Swaminathan Commission's recommendations on minimum support prices. Tarigami's calls for nationwide farmer solidarity and governmental interventions, such as the waiver of Kisan Credit Card loans, underscored a collective effort to mitigate the financial challenges faced by the farming community.[31]

The rally was marked by an energetic atmosphere, reflecting the resilience and optimism of the youth and participants despite challenging conditions. The chant 'Save Apple, Save Kashmir' evolved beyond a mere slogan, embodying a profound plea for the protection of Kashmir's cultural and economic heritage. This rallying cry signified not only the closure of the conference but also the dawn of a revitalized advocacy for the apple sector and the overall welfare of

30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.

Kashmir. This assembly and subsequent rally highlighted the crucial link between democratic rights and agricultural prosperity, advocating for an integrated approach that honours and enhances the welfare of Kashmir's inhabitants and their economic foundations. This movement represents a step towards securing recognition and support for the agricultural sector, especially the apple industry, aiming to cultivate a future where democracy and economic stability are intrinsically linked.[32]

The National Conference on Apple Farming in Kashmir (India) not only highlighted the complex challenges faced by apple growers but also underscored the urgent need to address the neo-liberal economic policies that exacerbate these challenges. The unchecked neoliberal agenda, often characterized by deregulation, privatization, and a free-market economy, has significantly contributed to the vulnerabilities within the apple industry in Kashmir. This conference illuminated the stark realities of how such policies facilitate corporate dominance, leading to exploitative practices that undermine the livelihoods of local apple farmers. A critical examination of these discussions suggests that for the apple industry in Jammu and Kashmir to thrive and be sustainable, there must be a concerted effort to curtail neo-liberal exploitation. Implementing protective measures, regulatory frameworks, and support systems that prioritize the welfare of the farming community over corporate profits is paramount. This approach not only aims to safeguard the apple industry from the adverse impacts of neo-liberal policies but also ensures its long-term sustainability and resilience. Thus, the conference's deliberations call for a re-evaluation of current economic policies, advocating for a shift towards more equitable, farmer-centric approaches that can foster a more sustainable and prosperous future for apple growers in the region and beyond.

Conclusion

The outcomes of the conference, while positive, bring to light several important issues that need further attention. The conference aimed to address the challenges faced by apple growers but may not have fully covered the wide range of difficulties experienced by farmers from varied backgrounds. There is a need for greater emphasis on giving voice to the struggles of marginalized or small-scale farmers, which would make the discussions more inclusive and ensure that a wider array of concerns is considered. However, the occurrence of

32. Ibid.

floods in different parts of India, as reported by the ”Economic Times” in 2023,[33] posed significant challenges that may have affected the ability to fully achieve this goal. Furthermore, to turn the conference's recommendations into tangible outcomes, it is essential to develop and implement detailed plans of action along with mechanisms for ongoing monitoring. Without a clear framework for implementation, there's a risk that the conference's decisions will remain theoretical and not lead to meaningful improvements for the apple farming community. Although the focus on sustainable practices and fair pricing is commendable, the increasing threat posed by climate change to apple farming requires additional focus. Developing strategies for climate adaptation and resilience is vital to mitigate the negative impacts of environmental changes on apple cultivation.

To sum up, the National Conference on Apple Farming has shed light on ways to improve the health and economic stability of India's apple agriculture sector. It highlighted the importance of collective action, strategic planning, and the adoption of adaptive measures to address the current challenges in agriculture, aiming to protect the livelihoods of numerous farmers and enhance the sector's sustainability and economic success.

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33. *Economic Times*. “Uttarakhand Yamunotri, Badrinath Roads Blocked Due to Falling Debris.” *The Economic Times*, June 28, 2023. Retrieved from https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/uttarakhand-yamunotri-badrinath-roads-blocked-due-to-falling-debris/articleshow/101773811.cms.

7

In Memory of Harpal Brar: In praise of Stalin

Harpal Brar

In commemoration of the recent passing of comrade Harpal Brar, founder and long-time chairman of our fraternal Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist–Leninist), we reprint this erudite speech in defense of Stalin which he gave to a hostile group of Trotskyists in 1998. Brar committed his life to the struggle of the working and oppressed peoples of the world. He produced a great wealth of insights for subsequent generations to continue studying and learning from. While comrade Brar, in the physical form, may have passed to meet Marx, his ideas stay with us and are as pertinent as ever.

Comrades, when I was invited to speak, I was slightly taken aback, and I spoke with your national organiser, comrade Fischer, and said: "Look, I regard Stalin as a great continuer of the Leninist tradition, and your views are just the opposite. It's unlikely I'll change your mind, and you won't change mine, and where conviction is so deep, what's the point of having a debate?" He assured me there were comrades floating between the line of the Weekly Worker and our line. So I hope there will be some floating comrades able to listen to what I say, make up your own minds, and of course come over to the viewpoint I uphold.

I have been asked to speak on the legacy of Stalin. It's a very large topic - one cannot to do justice to it in an hour. 'Stalinism' is not a term which either Stalin

or any of his supporters invented. It's a term invented by Trotskyism, and it's a term invented by the bourgeoisie, and as a result of a great deal of collaboration between the two sides, Trotskyism and the ordinary bourgeois. I regard Stalin as a great Leninist. I do not regard him as having done something very original, except that he had a genius for putting into effect the precepts of Marxism-Leninism. I think that's where his great achievement lies. He never pretended, like a lot of Bolsheviks who shall remain unnamed, to have something new to say. He constantly referred to Lenin, and said, 'This is what comrade Lenin said: that's what we are going to do. It makes sense to me, and I don't wish to disagree with other people just for the sake of disagreeing. We've got a job to do and that's what we are going to get on with.'

I want to summarise in the beginning, and then substantiate, exactly what Stalin's contribution was. I think the most significant contribution was first of all to hold the Party together by routing all the fractious elements. No doubt you'll call it Bonapartist purges and all the rest of it. But actually to have maintained the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union in those times could not be done except on the basis of the strictest iron discipline, for which not Stalin, but Lenin was responsible through the resolution that he personally wrote for the 10th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The second thing Stalin did was lead the Party not only to defeat the opposition - he had to do this before anything positive could be done - but also convince the Party in the fashion of Lenin that it was perfectly possible that socialism could be built in the Soviet Union. Although it would have been lovely if revolution had come in Germany, Britain, France, the United States of America and the leading capitalist countries, it hadn't come - that was the fact. And there's no point in saying that Stalin betrayed the revolution. People who say so have a soft spot for social democracy. If anybody betrayed the revolution in Western Europe, it was social democracy, and not Stalin. Social democracy had betrayed the revolution during the time of Lenin, and it was to do so again in the period leading to World War II and subsequently. Stalin led the fight for the building of socialism, and constructed socialism. Should someone question whether socialism was constructed, I shall give them quotations from none other than Leon Davidovich Trotsky.

Building socialism wasn't something minor. It meant pulling the Soviet Union out of its feudal and medieval integument into the modern world, and building modern socialist industry and collectivised agriculture. I come from a peasant country, where the peasantry live in miserable conditions. I believe in

collectivisation - socialist collectivisation. Stalin's was a tremendous achievement.

And the third achievement was to have built the Red Army, which was to have the glorious role of almost single-handedly smashing the fascists from Germany and their allies. And at the end of his life to have waged a struggle against people in the Party who were trying to bring in the ideas of market socialism, and to have rehabilitated Soviet production within three years of the end of the war to pre-war levels, and within three years after that to have doubled it.

These are Stalin's significant achievements, and these are his legacy to the communist movement. I don't care that as I speak people snigger and say, 'These are the typical sayings of Stalinists.' To me they are axioms. They are achievements of working class power, of which working people everywhere can be proud. If you go around the world, working people are indeed proud of the Soviet achievement, and so, notwithstanding the reversals that have taken place since the days of Krushchevite revisionism, notwithstanding what has happened in Eastern Europe, it doesn't prove anything wrong about the pursuits of Stalin, and what he was trying to achieve. On the contrary, it shows how important it is to have revolutionary leadership, how important it is to fight revisionism and Trotskyism. The 21st century will never be what the 19th century was, such has been the effect of the October Revolution, and I must say Stalin had some part to play, no matter how modest that part may be. It was certainly far greater than we collectively have ever played or are likely to play.

On the question of holding the Party together. Time and again, it has been asserted that what Stalin was trying to do was cleverly manoeuvre to eliminate every opposition - all those brilliant Bolshevik leaders - so that he could become the sole man in charge. There is absolutely no truth in this. Stalin always believed that after the death of Lenin there was not a single leader in the Party able to step into Lenin's shoes. It was therefore very important to have a collective leadership. Stalin worked as hard as possible with all the leaders - with Kamenev, Zinoviev, and he wanted to work with Trotsky. This was at a time when Kamenev and Zinoviev refused to speak to Trotsky. They wanted Trotsky's expulsion from the Party. Stalin said to them: 'You can't do that. If you start doing that you lop off one arm today, the other tomorrow, and a leg the day after that, and what would be left of the Party?'

It wasn't until much later on, over the question of whether socialism could be built in the Soviet Union or not by the year 1925, that they united together in

hostility to the Party. Although they were known as brilliant Marxists and great theoreticians, they hadn't a clue how to function. Stalin wanted to work with them. And when they forced the debate in the Party on whether socialism should or should not be constructed, or could or could not be constructed, there was a full debate - and let no one tell me the 'Stalinist bureaucracy' stopped the debate taking place. Debate raged in the Party, in the factory units, on the farms, all over the country. And when the vote took place, the Trotskyists and the new opposition, as it was called, along with Kamenev and Zinoviev, got 4,000 votes, as opposed to something like 700,000 that the Party got. That was their strength. There was nothing bureaucratic about this straightforward defeat.

I ask you, comrades: a revolution has taken place in Britain. Your theory says socialism cannot be built in a single country, unless revolution comes in a number of other countries. For reasons that are beyond your control - you haven't betrayed the revolution: you obviously want it everywhere - it doesn't come. What exactly do you do? It's a practical question. There are two things. Our theory says socialism cannot be built. So that's it. Lets shut up shop and go home. It was a one-day wonder. The proletariat simply lived to go to the barricades, win, and then be slaughtered. The other thing is - no, it hasn't come, but we're going to make a go of it. I can provide textual evidence - Lenin, all over the place - on the question of whether revolution is possible in several countries, let alone all over the world. And he said it's a rarity. It is not a Stalinist invention that this is so: it is what Lenin said, as early as 1916, in the United States of Europe article - this question has caused some controversy in the SLP.

Read Lenin's article on the military programme of the proletarian dictatorship. Read his article on cooperatives. And what does he say? Socialism can be built. It can be built, because things have changed since Marx's day. Things have changed because old free-competition capitalism has become monopoly capitalism. When monopoly capitalism comes on the stage, the question of revolution can no longer be looked at in the old way. It's not a question of whether in a given country the proletariat is in the majority or not. The question is that under conditions of imperialism the whole world is ripe for revolution. Where will the chain of imperialism break? Nobody can say for certain, but it is likely to break down at its weakest link, and in February, and in October/November 1917, Russia proved to be the weakest link.

The Trotskyists and the opposition suffered defeat, and a lot of people called it Stalin's manoeuvring. The reason the Trotskyist opposition failed was because

it was trying to depart from Marxism-Leninism on the question of building socialism. Stalin raised this question: he said, 'How are we to explain the fact that, notwithstanding his oratorical skills, his will to lead and his abilities, Trotsky was thrown out of the leadership of the CPSU(B)?' And Stalin goes on to answer, 'The reason is that the opposition intended to replace, to "improve" Leninism with Trotskyism.' But the Party wanted to remain true to Leninism. That's the root cause why the Party which made three revolutions found it necessary to turn its back on Trotsky and on the opposition as a whole.

Stalin raised the same question at the 15th Congress, when he said, 'How could it happen that the Party as a whole, and after it the working class as a whole, so thoroughly isolated the opposition?' After all the opposition was headed by well known people, with well known names, people who know how to advertise themselves - people who were not afflicted with modesty, and were able to blow their own trumpet. It happened because the leading group of the opposition turned out to be a group of petty bourgeois intellectuals, divorced from life, divorced from the revolution and divorced from the working class. And that's why it was defeated.

Stalin goes on to say that the opposition thinks its defeat can be explained by the personal factor, by Stalin's rudeness. That is too cheap - an incantation, not an explanation. Trotsky had been fighting Leninism since 1904. From 1904 until the February Revolution of 1917, he hung around the Mensheviks, desperately fighting Lenin's Party all the time. During that period Trotsky suffered a number of defeats at the hands of Lenin's Party. Why? Perhaps Stalin's rudeness was to blame. But Stalin was not yet general secretary of the central committee of the time. He was not abroad, but in Russia, fighting tsarism underground. Whereas the struggle between Trotsky and Lenin raged abroad. So what has Stalin's rudeness got to do with it?

During the period from the October Revolution to 1923, Trotsky, already a member of the Bolshevik Party, made two grand sorties against Lenin and his Party. In 1918 on the question of the Brest peace, and in 1921 on the trade union question. But these sorties ended in Trotsky being defeated. Why? At that time Stalin was not yet general secretary of the central committee. The secretariat was then occupied by notorious Trotskyists. So what has Stalin's rudeness got to do with that? Later, Trotsky made a number of fresh sorties against the Party, in 1923, 24, 26 and 27. And each sortie ended in Trotsky's defeat. Is it not obvious that Trotsky's fight against the Party had deep historical roots? Is it not obvious that the struggle that the Party was waging

against Trotskyism was a continuation of the struggle that the Party headed by Lenin waged from 1904 onwards? Is it not obvious that the attempts of Trotskyists to replace Leninism by Trotskyism were the chief cause of the failure of the entire line of the opposition?

So, the whole idea that as soon as Lenin died, the struggle took place because Trotsky was fighting against Stalinist bureaucracy is nonsensical. As Stalin rightly described, Trotsky was the chief patriarch of bureaucrats. You could not find a more bureaucratic person than Trotsky, whose solution to every problem was militarisation. Militarisation of the trade unions, militarisation of everybody. This could not be done. Working class power could not be held in place if everybody was simply ordered. So you come to a position where you have socialist construction taking place. And Trotsky himself had to admit what exactly the achievements of socialism were.

Revolution Betrayed is a Trotsktist bible. If anyone is a Trotskyist, that's one book that they are likely to have read. I'd actually like them to have read all of Trotsky. The best way to refute Trotskyism is to read Trotsky. He trips himself up each paragraph and contradicts the previous paragraph. Each book contradicts the previous book, and so on. I can see what the attraction of Trotsky is for the average petty bourgeois, and especially the intelligentsia. He has a terrific turn of phrase, but it doesn't enlighten anybody. I also read Trotsky and find at times that he's quite good. For example here, in Revolution Betrayed, he says: "Gigantic achievements in industry, enormously promising beginnings in agriculture, an extraordinary growth of old industrial cities, and the building of new ones. A rapid increase in the number of workers, a rise in cultural level and cultural demands. Such are the indubitable results of the October Revolution." People are 'betraying' it, but the October Revolution is somehow working these wonderful achievements.

"Socialism has demonstrated its right to victory". And that's written by the gentleman who says that it's not possible, it's not capable of being built in a single country, and there's got to be a world revolution. "Socialism has demonstrated its right to victory, not in the pages of Capital, but in an industrial arena comprising one sixth of the world's land surface. Not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel, cement and electricity. A backward country has achieved in less than 10 years successes unexampled in history. That is so. This also ends the quarrel with the reformists in the workers' movement. Can we compare for one moment their mouse-like fussing with the

titanic work accomplished by this people aroused to a new life by this revolution." Now that's Trotsky. I hope you like it.

Then, Stalinism is supposed to be herding everybody, like cattle. Stalin raises his finger, and everyone from Khrushchev down to the factory operator dances to his tune. Not so, if we believe Trotsky. I wasn't there, but Trotsky should know something about Russia. "To be sure," he says, "the youth are very active in the sphere of economics. In the Soviet Union there are now 1.2 million communist youth in the collective farms. Hundreds of thousands of members of the communist youth have been mobilised in recent years for construction work, timber work, coal mining, gold production, for work in the Arctic, Sakhalin or in a mood where the new town of Komsomolsk is in the process of production. The new generation is putting out shock brigands, champion works, Stakhanov-ites, foremen, under-administrators. The youth has studied, and is studying assiduously ..." Of course Stalin said 'study' and they studied.

"They are as active, if not more so, in the sphere of athletics, including its most warlike forms, such as parachute jumping and marksmanship. The enterprising and audacious are going on all kinds of dangerous expeditions. The better part of our youth, said recently the well known polar explorer Schmidt, are eager to work where difficulties await them. This is undoubtedly true. It would be crude slander against the youth to portray them as controlled exclusively or even predominantly by personal interests. No, in the general mass, they're magnanimous, responsive, enterprising. In their ranks are various unformulated tendencies grounded in heroism, and still only awaiting application. It is upon these moves in particular that the newest kind of Soviet patriotism is nurturing itself. It is undoubtedly sincere and dynamic."

That was Trotsky, who thought that socialism could not be built, and that the leadership had betrayed the revolution. These achievements are the finest examples of the kind of 'betrayal' that I would like to see everywhere. I wish that we could have a leadership who would actually 'betray' the proletariat so much.

So you have Soviet industry being built, and there is really not a single country in the world where there was such labour heroism, where there was such an unleashing of the initiative of the masses. There was nothing that the Soviet people didn't think that they could do, and they were right. The breathtaking audacity, and the all-encompassing, awe-inspiring achievements really are fantastic as far as the Soviet people are concerned. And it is really only because

of that, that is was possible for the Soviet people to go along and defeat Nazi Germany.

But the Soviet Union could not have achieved this, had it not got rid of the fifth column. No doubt, most people sitting here consider that the Moscow trials were staged by Stalin, that Stalin acted as the judge, jury and prosecutor. Far from it. Time will not allow me to present the evidence of the Moscow trials. Any of you who are genuinely interested, rather than raising Aunt Sallies, should read the transcripts of the Moscow trials. They run into about 2,000 pages. The Moscow trials were held in front of over 1,000 foreign journalists. Foreign diplomats attended. Among them was Joseph Davy, no great communist, from the United States of America - he was the ambassador. He sent reports to his government saying, 'These trials are correct and these people are guilty'. There is plenty of evidence. His masters wrote back to him saying, 'This is so, but it's not something we want the people of the world to know. We have to say these trials are rigged.'

Here are these 51 or 52 people who have been in the Bolshevik Party for a long time. They come and admit to all kinds of heinous crimes, from sabotage to wrecking, to treasonable associations with foreign powers, including Germany and Japan. If a common criminal is arrested, the moment he comes to court he says, 'I was beaten and the police extracted this confession out of me.' I invite you, even if you have to force yourselves, to actually read the testimony of the accused in these trials. I invite you to read Bukharin's evidence at his trial - the same Bukharin who was denounced all the time as a rightwing revisionist. But the moment he turned against the building of socialism, he becomes a great communist and a leading member of the opposition, with whom Trotskyists have no difficulty working. Bukharin actually engages the prosecutor in philosophical discussions, and tries to actually answer the question, why was it possible, how did it come about that, from being Bolshevik revolutionaries, they became traitors to the socialist motherland? He explains the process.

No one, unless they are very crude, would say all these people entered the Bolshevik Party because they were agents of the bourgeoisie. Although that is not impossible in some cases. Was it unknown for infiltrators to get into revolutionary parties? Is any single group free from it? Is your group free from it? Of course not. Lenin was so strict about who should join the Bolshevik Party - but who did he put on the central committee? Comrade Malinovsky. Comes the revolution, and where is Malinovsky? The one time you want to be with your comrades, when you've won, he's missing. The Bolsheviks seize the

records of the tsarist police, the okhrana. And what do they find? He was a tsarist agent. It was on his information that so many people were sent to Siberia. So they caught him somewhere in the streets of Moscow.

Was Malinosky given a trial? No. Lenin quite rightly said that the dictatorship of the proletariat is unrestricted by law. It doesn't first say, this is the article in the criminal code that you violated, and therefore we shall try you. No. Malinovsky said, 'I'm sorry. I tried to be a fake Bolshevik I shall be a real one if you give me a chance.' Lenin said, 'Take this scoundrel out and shoot him', and they did. Stalin did no such thing. He said, 'Our intelligence agencies have this, that and the other evidence against these people: present it in court.'

The fact that these people were eliminated has been put out as the decapitation of the Party, and the decapitation of the Red Army. Funny 'decapitation'. Funny that this 'decapitated' army, which was expected to last no more than six weeks in the face of the German onslaught, is actually the army that raised the red flag over the Reichstag.

You see, before the war started, Trotsky's prediction was that the Soviet Union would lose. The Stalinist bureaucracy was "frightened" of the workers, the workers at home were disgruntled and the war simply could not be waged. And Trotsky said, "Can we however expect that the Soviet Union will come out of the coming great war without defeat?" To this question, frankly posed by Trotsky, we will answer as frankly:

"If the war should only remain a war, the defeat of the Soviet Union will be inevitable. In a technical, economic and military sense, imperialism is incomparably more strong, and if it is not paralysed by revolution in the west, then of course imperialism would win."

In 1940, just before another Trotskyist did him to death, Trotsky said: "We always started from the fact that the international policy of the Kremlin was determined by the 'new aristocracy's' incapacity to conduct war. The ruling caste is no longer capable of thinking about tomorrow. Its formula is the same as that of all doomed regimes - after us, the deluge. The war will topple many things, and many individuals. Artifice, trickery, frame-ups, and treasons will prove of no avail in escaping its severe judgements." This is what Trotsky said in his article, 'Stalin, feckless quartermaster'. Lovely, isn't it?

He then goes on to say, Stalin cannot make a war, with discontented workers and peasants, and with a "decapitated" Red Army. The level of the USSR's

productive forces forbids a major war. Involvement of the USSR in a major war before the end of this period will signify a struggle with unequal weapons. The subjective factor, not less important than the material, has changed in the last few years very sharply for the worse. Stalin cannot wage an offensive war with any hope of victory. Should the USSR enter the war with its "innumerable victims" (mainly Trotskyists), the "whole fraud of the official regime, its outrages and violence, will inevitably provoke a profound reaction on the part of the people, who have already carried out three revolutions in this century. The present war can crush the Kremlin bureaucracy, long before revolutionary war breaks out in some capitalist country." That's what Trotsky says.

And how did the average Soviet soldier fight? You see, if a regime is unpopular, decrepit and rotten, the best time to overthrow it is during a war. This is what happened to tsarist autocracy. A rotten regime can last in ordinary, peaceful times. But it cannot survive the kind of feverish changes that took place in the Soviet Union in peaceful times as well as in warlike times. It could only last because it was closely connected with the people. Because the leadership had become a representative spokesperson for the ordinary people. And the average soldier went to his death with one slogan on his lips - 'For the motherland, and for comrade Stalin'. To them, as even a renegade like Gorbachev admits, the major part in the victory of the Soviet Union was Stalin's leadership, and his ability to organise things and wage war in a disciplined manner. And Gorbachev hated Stalin every bit as much as did Trotsky.

I quote from a bourgeois author called Ian Grey, who has written a biography of Stalin. He said the massive setbacks and the immediate threat to Moscow - the initial 12 weeks of the war - would have unnerved most men. "But the impact on Stalin was to strengthen his determination to fight. No single factor was more important than holding the nation from disintegration at this time." He carries on: "It was in a real sense his [that is, Stalin's] victory." Grey cites Isaac Deutscher - "Collectivised farming had been the peasant's preparatory school for mechanised warfare" - and comments:

"It was his victory too because he had directed and controlled every branch of Russian operations throughout the war. The range and burden of his responsibilities were extraordinary. But day after day, without a break throughout the war, he exercised direct command of the Russian forces and control of supplies, of war industry and government policy, including foreign policy."

Isaac Deutscher says, how “dreary”, “dull”, “bureaucratic”, etc Stalin was. The very same Stalin as he describes in these wonderful terms: “Many allied visitors who called at the Kremlin during the war were astonished to see how many issues, great and small, military, political or diplomatic, Stalin personally took the final decision in. He was in effect commander in chief, his own minister of defence, his own quartermaster, his own minister of supply, his own foreign minister, and even his own chef de protocol. The Stavka, the Red Army’s general headquarters, was in his office in the Kremlin.

“From his office desk, in constant and direct touch with the commands at the fronts, he watched and directed the campaigns in the fields. From his office desk too, he managed another stupendous operation, the evacuation of 1,360 plants and factories from western Russia and the Ukraine to the Volga, the Urals and Siberia, an evacuation that involved not only machines and installations, but millions of workmen and their families. He bargained with Beaverbrook and Harriman over the quantities of aluminium or the calibre of rifles and anti-aircraft guns to be delivered to Russia by the western allies. Or he received leaders of the guerrillas from German-occupied territories, and discussed with them raids to be carried out hundreds of miles behind the enemy’s lines. Thus he went on, day after day, throughout the four years of hostilities, a prodigy of patience, tenacity and vigilance, almost omnipresent, almost omniscient.” For a dull, dreary, bureaucratic person, I think that’s pretty good.

He continues:

“There’s no doubt that he was their [that is, the Soviet troops’] real commander in chief. His leadership was by no means confined to taking abstract strategic decisions, at which civilian politicians may excel. The avid interest with which he studied the technical aspects of modern warfare, down to the minutest details, show him to have been anything but a dilettante. He viewed the war primarily from the angle of logistics, to secure reserves of manpower and supplies of weapons, in the right quantities and proportions, to allocate them and transport them to the right points at the right time, to amass a decisive strategic reserve, and to have it ready for intervention at decisive moments. These operations made up nine tenths of his task.”

And, believe it or not, Deutscher says: “It should not be imagined that the majority of the nation was hostile to the government. If that had been the case, no patriotic appeals, no prodding or coercion would have prevented Russia’s political collapse, for which Hitler was confidently hoping. The great

transformation that the country had gone through before the war had strengthened the moral fibre of the nation. The majority was imbued with a strong sense of its economic and social advance, which it was grimly determined to defend against dangers from without." Which means it was as much a victory for socialism that had been built in the Soviet Union, as it was for mere Russian patriotism.

In a speech to business managers in 1931, Stalin said: 'We're 50 or 100 years behind advanced countries. We must make good this lag in 10 years. Either we do it, or they crush us.' So Stalin had spoken exactly 10 years before Hitler set out to conquer Russia. His words, recalled now, could not but impress people as a prophecy, brilliantly fulfilled, as a most timely call to action. Indeed a few years' delay in the modernisation of Russia might have made all the difference between victory and defeat.

As Jehovah's Witnesses would say, 'My time is up'. I'm going to end with this quotation, comrades, After the victory of the Soviet Army against the fascists, there was a victory parade in Red Square, Moscow. And Deutscher captures the scene as follows: "On June 24 1945, Stalin stood on the top of the Lenin Mausoleum, and reviewed a great military parade of the Red Army, which marked the fourth anniversary of Hitler's attack. By Stalin's side stood Marshal Zhukov, his deputy, the victor of Moscow, Stalingrad and Berlin. The troops that marched past him were led by Marshal Rokassowski. As they marched, rode and galloped across Red Square, regiments of infantry, cavalry and tanks swept the mud off its pavements with innumerable banners and standards of Hitler's army. At the Mausoleum, they threw the banners at Stalin's feet. The allegorical scene was strangely imaginative. The next day Stalin received the tribute of Moscow, for the defence of the city in 1941. The day after, he was acclaimed as hero of the Soviet Union, and given the title of Generalissimo.

"In these days of undreamed of glory," continued Deutscher,

"Stalin stood in the full gaze of popular recognition and gratitude. These feelings were spontaneous, genuine - not engineered by official propagandists. Overworked slogans about the achievements of the Stalinist era now conveyed fresh meaning, not only to young people, but to sceptics and malcontents in the older generation."

But not for sceptics in this country.

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